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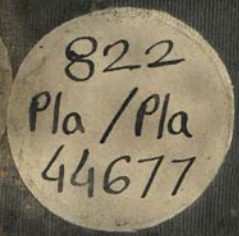
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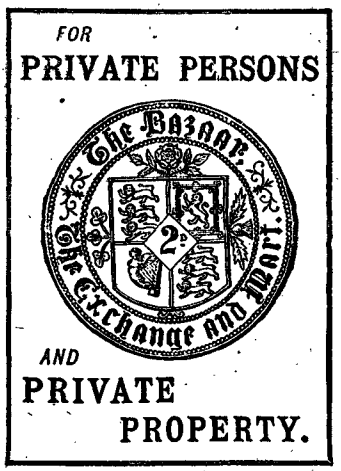

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PLAYS

FOR

AMATEUR ACTORS.

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BY R. ANDRÉ.

THE MYSTERY OF A HANDSOME CAP.
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BEAUTIFUL HELEN.
BY F. C. BURNAND.

AND

TO BE LET, FURNISHED.
BY C. J. HAMILTON.

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UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

SELECT PLAYS FOR AMATEUR PERFORMERS. By F. C. Broughton, R. André, and Sir Gilbert Campbell. Illustrated.

PLAYS FOR AMATEUR ACTORS. By F. C. Burnand, C. J. Hamilton, and R. André. Illustrated.

LONDON: WARD, LOCK AND CO.

FOOD FOR POWDER.

A VAUDEVILLE FOR THE DRAWING-ROOM.

Dramatis Personæ.

MICHEL SABOT.
CHARLES BERNAND.
SERGEANT POMPON.
FIFINE, sister of Michel.
TOINETTE, betrothed to Michel.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The cabaret of* MICHEL SABOT. *A poor interior. Two doors, one supposed to lead to the street, the other to an outhouse. Winter evening. Lamp on table.* FIFINE *discovered at street door, with* CHARLES, *who has just entered. He is very ragged and disreputable in appearance, but has the manner of a gentleman. His hat is drawn down over his face as if to avoid recognition.*

MUSIC—"The Vagabond."

Fifine. Not a sou?

Charles. Positively, Mademoisllle, not one! I regret the fact as much as you do.

Fifine. But cabarets, respectable cabarets, are not for——

Charles. Tramps, Mademoiselle — quite so. (*Bows.*) But I am not particular ; I don't ask for fire, I am indifferent to supper, and I have no wish to spoil your furniture. Let me lie down in the shed.

Fifine (*looking at him with suspicion*). Well, if a truss of straw will satisfy you, my good man, you are welcome to a bed. (CHARLES *bows.* FIFINE *is amused at his politeness.*) Would milord like to see his room ?

Charles (*as he exits, shown into outhouse*). A thousand thanks, Mademoiselle.

Fifine. He is a strange tramp ! A criminal, perhaps ? a traveller who isn't *bona fide !* What have *I* done ?

(TOINETTE *looks in at the street door.*)

Toinette. Fifine ?

Fifine. You, Toinette ? Well, come in ! You're almost mistress of the house, you know.

Toinette. Has he come in yet ?

Fifine. Your he ? Certainly not. As if the Conscription was an affair of five minutes ! You think he will draw an unlucky number, I suppose ?

Toinette. I have been crying about it all the evening.

Fifine. You goose ! Everything succeeds with my brother. He was born under a lucky star, like Napoleon.

Toinette. Yes, he's engaged to *me !* But nobody ever patronizes this cabaret.

Fifine. Nobody ? Why, we have a milord vagabond in the scullery ! But *his* bill won't amount to much.

Toinette. Poor, poor Michel !

Fifine. Poor fiddlestick ! I am a witch. I read his fortune in my teacup, and Michel will draw a lucky number. You and he can get married to-morrow, and we will all three live happy for ever afterwards.

Toinette. All four you mean ; for you will be married too.

Fifine. To whom, pray ? Every house "To Let"

doesn't find a tenant. Oh, no! I am an old maid. I shall be the dear old aunt to your little ones. I shall cut their bread and butter and wipe their little noses. I shall——

LIBRA
OF TH
ROYAL

(*Enter* MICHEL *violently, slams door, throws his cap on floor, sulkily.*)

Michel. Just my luck!

Toinette. What's the matter, Michel? Angry at finding *me* here?

Michel (*with forced gaiety*). Not at all. I'm delighted —ha! ha! ha!

Fifine. We have been waiting for you, to be jolly all together. And how about this wonderful Conscription of yours? It's all over now, I suppose?

Michel. All over—yes.

Toinette. And you drew a lucky number?

Michel. To be sure—the very best.

Fifine. There! Didn't I tell you?

Michel. Number one!

Toinette (*horrified*). What?

Michel. Well, some one must have drawn it.

Fifine. But why *you?* There is no justice in this world.

Toinette. And now you will have to go. (*Cries.*)

Fifine (*cries*). And be "Food for Powder."

Michel. Wait a bit; I'm alive at present. You will miss me here, and I daresay they will miss me over yonder. There's plenty of room for cannon balls on both sides of me, and plenty of room for you, too. (*Stands between them, kissing them alternately, with his arms round them.*)

SONG—"I Have Him On My List" (*Mikado*).

I know it is a pity, and the law is most unjust,
That forced me to enlist,
That forced me to enlist;
In Conscription there is not the least compulsion, but you must!
Come, my darlings, and be kissed,
Come, my darlings, and be kissed.
I may shiver in the trenches, I may freeze till I am blue,
They may sabre me to mincemeat, or with lances run me through;
I must go where bullets wait me, and the odds are I may fall,
With my waistcoat giving freely invitations to the ball!
But if on my survival you so tearfully insist,
I'll promise to be missed,
I'll promise to be missed.
(*Ensemble*) He'll promise to be missed,
He'll promise to be missed,
Come, my darlings, and be kissed.

Old ladies watch us down the street,
And maidens, pretty dears!
Think nothing half so great a treat
As us, the Grenadiers!

Chorus. For we're all very fine and large!
We're fat, and sound, and prime!
Just look when drums are beating,
And see us march in time.
We're the darlings of the nation,
And who could stand our charge,
When we all of us slew a dozen or two
For we're all very fine and large!

Remember too, my bold recruit,
Although they say you bear
A baton in your knapsack,
I never found one there;
You may perhaps attain my rank
By serving twenty years—
No matter—life is but a blank,
Except to Grenadiers.

Chorus. For we're all very fine, &c.

Fifine. That's all very fine.

Pompon (*taking up chorus*). Yes, "All very fine and large."

Fifine. But then one would rather not.

Michel. My dear Fifine and Toinette, women don't understand these things. Go and look after the supper, and leave me with the Sergeant.

Pompon. Yes, Mesdames, to your saucepans. Double! March! [*Exeunt* TOINETTE *and* FIFINE. Now that we are alone, I say again, a man of your build ought to be proud of his chance. I shall be proud to introduce you to the canon.

Michel. I am ready, Sergeant. Do we start soon?

Pompon. At daybreak we must take to our knapsacks and our legs. Double! March!

Michel. So soon! It is hard to leave a sister who

depends on me, and a girl who loves but me in all the world.

Pompon. A Grenadier should be made of sterner stuff. Look here, young man, in my time I have had *my* little love episodes. But I retreated in good order. I never said good-bye.

SONG—"Comin' through the Rye."
(*Very confidentially and piano.*)

If a body leave a body
(Say it's you or I),
It is only some Tom Noddy,
Makes a body cry—
Fate, perhaps, may turn the laddie's
Happiness awry;
But take a Grenadier's advice,
And never say good-bye.

Michel. I shall do my duty, Sergeant.

Pompon. As a Grenadier—good. One moment. You know where we go? Moscow. I should advise you to wear flannel. Remember, daybreak. I shall tap at the window, *Toc, toc*, you will answer me, *Hem! hem!* and *en route!* My compliments to your ladies. *Au revoir!*

[*Exit.*

Michel. Well, well. There's no help for it. Men must fight and women must weep. It's the law of nature, and of the Conscription. Poor Fifine! poor Toinette! and only a few hours!

(*Enter* FIFINE *and* TOINETTE, *crying.*)

Toinette. Well, Michel? No hope?

(CHARLES *appears at door listening.*)

Fifine. Don't cry, Toinette. Let us be reasonable. (*Sobbing.*) Let us throw ourselves at the feet of the General, Marshal, Corporal, or somebody, and Michel must say: "Sir, I cannot go; I don't want to be killed. I am a brave man, but I have a sister and a wife. Put

me in prison, but give me my discharge, and Vive l'Empereur!"

Michel. My discharge? But I must find a substitute.

Toinette. Some one who would be killed instead of you. How I would love him!

Fifine. And I! If we could but find such a friend, I would give him all I possess—my Sunday gown, my earrings, this cross, which was my mother's.

Michel. Silly Fifine! Such rubbish would not bribe a man.

Fifine. Well, *I* am worth something, perhaps. I will give myself. I will say, "I am not beautiful, but I have a good heart. Save my brother—save us three—and I promise, if you take my brother's place, on your return I will be your wife! I will love no other but you. I give this cross as a token of my promise!

(CHARLES *disappears.*)

Michel. Poor Fifine! You are dreaming (*looking round to door*). Eh? What was that?

Toinette. Where?

Michel. Surely there's some one in the scullery?

Fifine. Oh, I forgot; the vagabond milord in there. I daresay he wants his supper. (*Going to door.*) Come in, my good man.

Michel. No answer?

[FIFINE *exits by door and returns.*

Fifine. Gone! and the window on the street is open!

Michel. Gone elsewhere for his supper, no doubt. Let us follow his example, and have a morsel to eat, and get off to our beds. (*Aside.*) I am afraid of that Sergeant every moment. (*Aloud.*) Come, Fifine, bustle! Supper! Look happy! I have still a week. (*Aside.*) That's a Grenadier fib!

Fifine. A week? Then we have a thousand chances of finding a——

Michel (*interrupting*). Supper! Come, come, supper!

[*Exit* FIFINE.

Toinette. Dear Michel! how happy I am! A whole long week!

Michel. Listen, Toinette. (*Aside.*) It's no good, I can't keep up the Grenadier. It breaks my heart to tell her the truth, but I must. (*Aloud.*) Toinette——

Toinette (*alarmed*). What is it, Michel?

Michel. You'll be a brave girl. I leave at daybreak. How could I go without a last good-bye kiss?

BALLAD—"Good-bye" (*Tosti*).

Toinette. You must go, it has to be,
It is the voice of destiny,
Calling sadly to you and me,
Calling sadly to you and me—
The envious moments are hurrying by,
Kindling light in the morning sky.
Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye! good-bye.

(*Repeat refrain together.*)

Michel. Here comes Fifine. Not a word.

(*Enter* FIFINE *with supper. She busies herself with table, assisted by* MICHEL.)

Fifine. Now then, Michel, chairs. You come and sit between us.

Toinette. I am not hungry.

Fifine. Nonsense. One always eats when one is happy. (*She helps them, pours out wine, &c.*)

Toinette. I can't drink.

Fifine. Why, what is the matter with the girl?

(*Two taps heard on the window.*)

Michel. Ah!

Fifine. Who's there?

Michel (*aside*). The Sergeant! (*Aloud.*) Stay! I'll go and see.

Fifine. What is the matter, Toinette?

Toinette. Hold him, Fifine! Don't let him go! He has deceived us. It is the escort come to fetch him.

(MICHEL *opens door. Enter* POMPON *in marching order.* FIFINE *threatens him with knives.*)

Fifine. Never! I defy them! Sergeant, and all the Grenadiers!

Pompon (*smiling*). Fair ladies, the old soldier salutes you. And you, my brave young recruit, it is now morning——

Fifine. You are not wanted, Sergeant. Right about face! and quickly, too!

Pompon (*laughing*). That is what we shall do presently, my General. But, first, here is a little piece of paper for friend Michel. (FIFINE *tries to tear it away.*) Halt! I have brought his discharge.

All. His discharge?

Michel (*reading*). My discharge! my freedom! I do not go! What does this mean?

Pompon. It means, "as you were."

Toinette. I shall go mad! How good you are?

Pompon. The ladies are excellent judges.

Toinette. I really must kiss you!

Fifine (*throwing away knives, and embracing him at the same time*). And so must I!

Pompon. The army surrenders at discretion.

(MICHEL *brings wine and glasses.*)

CHORUS—"Come, Landlord, Fill the Flowing Bowl."

Come, Sergeant, drain the brimming cup,
Our grief is turned to laughter—
A Grenadier can drink it up,
A Grenadier can drink it up,
And half a dozen after."

(*Drum heard outside.*)

Michel. Fill! fill high! I hear the drums beating—
Bid care and trouble pass
Look at them through a glass!
Look at them through a glass!
To our next merry meeting!

(*Repeat chorus.*)

This is all a dream to me. Somebody explain.

Pompon (*producing a letter.*) Ma'mselle Fifine Sabot.

Fifine (*with a military salute*). Here!

Pompon. Good! Head and neck erect, chest advanced! (*Giving letter.*) Your orders, Ma'mselle.

Fifine. A letter—for me?

Michel. How dare any one write to my sister? I insist upon reading it.

Fifine (*reading*). "I, the Unknown, have seen you, have heard you." The Unknown? Why, that must be the milord vagabond! (*Reading.*) "I accept your cross and your conditions."

Michel. Short, pithy, and startling! But I forbid the banns!

Fifine. Wait a bit, Michel. I please myself. I am betrothed.

Michel. To an unknown! Better look before you leap.

Fifine. Love is blind; and surely you can't object to a husband of whom you know nothing. I am beginning to love him already. I wonder if he is very ugly. I could not see his face in the dark. But it makes no difference. I shall marry him. I am his property. Take my cross, Sergeant. You are a witness to our betrothal.

(*Music through the speech, piano, "Some day." Drum heard outside.*)

Pompon. The signal to fall in.

Fifine. And I shall never see him.

Pompon. We shall pass the window, Ma'mselle. (*Drum heard again.*) He will be there! Adieu!

[*Exit.*

Michel. I should like to have shaken his hand, whoever he is. He has done me a good turn.

Toinette. And will do another to Fifine.

Fifine (*at window*). Some day. But which is he? I shall know his hat—and that is something. Here they come!

(*All at the window. Drums and Grenadier's Chorus, "All very Fine and Large," Crescendo.*

Michel. How can you find your husband in that crowd? It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. There goes the old Sergeant!

Fifine. Ah! there's his hat. He will not look this way. See! he holds up my cross over his shoulder! It is he!—my husband!

(*Staggers back from window, supported by* MICHEL *and* TOINETTE. *Chorus of Grenadiers, loud, as Act Drop falls. Picture.*)

ACT II.

[*Two Years are supposed to elapse between Acts I. and II.*]

SCENE—*Same as Act I.* TOINETTE *discovered rocking a cradle.*

CRADLE SONG—"Hush-a-by, Baby" (*H. Clarke*).

Oh, you sweet little angel, tucked up in your bed,
As quiet as quiet can be,
With your chubby fat hands and your curly wee head,
What a sight for your daddy to see!
You're strong on your legs, and your dear toosy-pegs
You're cutting by twos and by threes—
You'll very soon talk, your learning to walk—
I'm proud of my boy, if you please!
Singing, La—e, lo—e, hush-a-by, baby!
Sweet baby bunting never must cry—
With my La—e, lo—e, hush-a-by, baby!
Daddy will come to you by and by.

But when will daddy come? That's the point. Not a line from him for three weary months! Fifine calls

herself a widow now; and well she may, after two years. I am nearly as badly off since Michel took it into his head to join the army, after all. Oh! this dreadful fighting! And he may come back to me with two wooden legs, and no visible means of support! Heigho!

Fifine (*outside*). Toinette! Toinette!

Toinette. There's Fifine. She goes every morning to the Post; there must be news.

(FIFINE *runs in excitedly, out of breath, and flourishing a letter.*)

Fifine. At last!

Toinette. From Michel! Give it to me——

Fifine. I must open it as my reward for having run so fast. (*Reads, very much out of breath.*) "Fontainebleau, 11th December." Only three weeks old! "Dearest Fifine, dearest Toinette,—All is over. The Emperor has abdicated; and we, who cannot follow him in his exile, return to our homes."

Toinette (*clapping her hands*). There, baby! Daddy *is* coming back!

Fifine (*reading*). "I start this very night." Three weeks ago? Why, he should have arrived! "But we travel slowly, because my Lieutenant is suffering from a severe wound. He has saved my life more than once, and I wish him to stay with us for rest on his journey. Prepare yourselves for a strange guest. He hates all society, and seldom speaks." What a cheerful companion! "Expect me on the 3rd."

(*Gives letter to* TOINETTE.)

Toinette. The 3rd! why, that is to-day! Come, baby, we must put on a clean cap and bib for daddy.

[*Exit with* BABY, *and re-enter.*

Fifine. But what does he want with the Lieutenant? I can fancy him—a grizzled old bear.

Toinette. Why, here is a postscript. (*Reads.*) "I

have made all possible inquiries about that poor devil who took my place two years ago, and about Sergeant Pompon, who is the only man that knew him. It appears their regiment was cut to pieces at the Beresina. Fifine need wait no longer."

Fifine. Then I really am a widow! and I didn't even know my husband by sight!

Toinette. Possibly you are in luck. You might have regretted him too much.

Fifine. No matter, I shall be faithful to his memory.

Toinette. Bah! Some of these fine days——

Fifine. Not at all. I have a presentiment he will turn up. I saw him in my teacup.

Toinette. You said Michel would draw a lucky number.

Fifine. Well, he didn't go, then, did he? And he isn't killed. And for proof—listen! Here he is!

MUSIC—"Johnny Comes Marching Home."

(*Enter* MICHEL *and* CHARLES. *Embrace, &c.*)

[N.B.—*There must be considerable change in the appearance of* MICHEL *since Act I. They both wear the uniform of the Guard.* CHARLES *carries his arm in a sling.*]

CHORUS—

Now, Michel, comes marching home,
Hurrah! hurrah! &c., &c., &c.

Michel. Here we are again, all safe and sound! And the little one?

Toinette. Asleep.

Michel. That's a polite way to receive an anxious parent. But I must kiss him.

Toinette. And he isn't washed yet.

Michel. Sit down, my Lieutenant. Excuse me for a few moments.

[*Exit with* TOINETTE.

(CHARLES *sits.* FIFINE *watches him.*)

Fifine. A young man! and we expected an old fright! You are tired, sir?

Charles. A little.

Fifine. Then we may hope you will rest here for some time?

Charles. Oh, no.

Fifine. Surely you are in no hurry to go?

Charles. Oh, yes.

(*Re-enter* MICHEL *and* TOINETTE.)

Michel. The very image of his dad, if he only had on my shako. Well, my Lieutenant! Look at him, Toinette and Fifine. You may thank him for a brother and a husband.

Charles. Come, Michel, you needn't bore us with that ancient history.

Michel. But I will. Look at this scar on my forehead, that speaks for itself.

Toinette. How shall we ever repay you?

Michel. By kissing him, to begin with.

Toinette. } With all my heart.
Fifine. }

Charles. No, no. I don't deserve it.

Michel. Just like him! So modest!

SONG—"The Cork Leg."

None but the brave deserve the fair—
He's a wonderful fellow, I do declare,
He'd charge by himself an enemy's square,
Nine lives like a cat, and a few to spare—
With his slashing, dashing,
Grenadier-issimo, fine bravado, fizz!

He took to himself quite pleasantly
The bullets and cuts that were meant for me.
He's all over scars, if you could but see—
And he won't even take a kiss for his fee!
With his slashing, dashing,
Grenadier-issimo, fine bravado, fizz!

Toinette. And there's a hero for you! He deserves a cross if any one ever did.

Fifine (*aside*). A cross! Heigho!

Michel. Do you know, Lieutenant, I have had it in my head for some time that you should live with us. You have only very distant relations, you said. During the past two years my affairs have improved. Why should you go?

Charles. My dear Michel, you are very good, but it is impossible; I must go.

Toinette. To live all alone like an old hermit.

Fifine. All alone? Ridiculous!

Michel. Don't you like this neighbourhood?

Charles. Charming. But still——

Michel. Wouldn't my wife make you comfortable?

Toinette. Have you any prejudice against Fifine?

Charles. What an idea! But, positively, I must go. I wished to see you at home. I have seen you. You are happy; I am happy in your happiness. And I say good-bye. (*Offers his hand. They all refuse it.*) Indeed, I am in a hurry; and if you, good Michel, cannot get me a carriole——

Michel. He'll set out on foot. At any rate, give me time to harness the horse. (*Aside to* TOINETTE.) Botheration! I thought he would be a good match for Fifine.

Toinette (*aside to* MICHEL). I thought so too. But the other one?

Michel. The other? There is no other; he was disestablished long ago; but this one——(*Aside to* FIFINE.) Fifine, make him change his mind.

Fifine. Who? I?

Michel. Do your best. Lieutenant, I'm off to the stables. [*Exit with* TOINETTE.

(*A pause. Charles sits apart, moodily, and smokes his pipe.* FIFINE *settles herself to needlework watching him with interest.*)

Fifine. What a melancholy creature! Still, there is something taking about a melancholy man.

Charles (*sighing*). Ah!

Fifine. Crossed in love, evidently.

Charles. No, no. I must not think of it (*speaking to himself*).

Fifine. That's what they all say, and they go on thinking. I should like to know his secret. Hem!

Charles (*seeing her*). Left alone with *her?* I, who have no talent for a *tête-à-tête.*

Fifine. The bold warrior trembles before a woman.

(*A pause.*)

Charles. I suppose I must say something. Do you object to smoke?

Fifine. I like it.

Charles. It's the only thing to do when one is miserable.

Fifine. Miserable? Perhaps you expect too much. But why should you, a brave officer, run away from the world, and hide yourself like a bear?

Charles. It might be dangerous to me to do otherwise.

Fifine. Are we so very dreadful here?

Charles. No—only——

Fifine. Only *what?*

Charles. If I should end by falling in love with you.

Fifine (*aside*). He seems to be less in a hurry now.

Charles. I was only joking.

Fifine. Of course. (*A pause.*)

Charles. Young and pretty as you are, there must be dozens of sweethearts about; and, of course, you have a favoured one.

Fifine. Indeed, I have not.

Charles. No? (*Moves his chair nearer.*) But your brother is anxious for your marriage. He has hinted as much to me; and I naturally thought——

Fifine. Nonsense. (*A pause.*)

Charles. What? you have no idea of getting married?

Fifine. Indeed, no! (*Charles moves his chair closer.*) But you must not look so miserable. I must be your doctor. What do these symptoms mean?

Charles (*moving chair*). That I am as wretched as I look.

Fifine. But why?

Charles. Because no one has ever loved me—no one.

Fifine (*moving her chair*). Poor young man! But your mother?

Charles. I never knew her. I was ill-treated at home. I ran away. I became soured with the world. I hated everything and everybody.

Fifine. Including women?

Charles. My bad luck was against me there. But once I thought I had met her whom I could love. It was madness, a dream, she has forgotten me long ago. (*Rises excitedly.*) That is why I would fly the world, why I have tried to get killed; but my luck was always against me. When I rushed in front of a battery, I got nothing but promotion; when I was surrounded by Cossacks, no harm came to me, only this ribbon; I was always unfortunate.

SONG—"The Vicar's Song" (*The Sorcerer*).

Time was of sudden deaths I sought the quickest,
For hopes the most forlorn a volunteer;
I madly rushed where bayonet points were thickest,
'Mid bursting shells I gave a ringing cheer.
When mines were sprung, I prayed for demolition,
To be blown up and not come down again;
But all the more I struggled for perdition,
Ah, me! I always was promoted then!

I courted Russian sabre strokes bare-headed,
Threw out my chest to meet the coming lance;
I stormed the breach which full battalions dreaded,
Of deadly wounds I never missed a chance.

And if, perhaps, some trifling bone was shattered,
Which might have killed a score of stronger men,
No wound to my good constitution mattered,
Ah, me! they never failed to cure it then!

Fifine. And no doubt you have been saved on purpose for some good little woman.

Charles. I would search the wide world for such an one.

Fifine. Perhaps it is hardly necessary to go quite so far.

Charles. Ah! if it were only you!

Fifine. You would trust me?

Charles. As if I did not know you! Your brother has told me. If I must confess, it was this hope that brought me here. Give me your hand. You will be my wife? I know you would keep your promise.

Fifine. My promise? But I have given my promise to the other, and I am forgetting him. (*Turns away.*)

Charles (*surprised*). Fifine!

Fifine. No, no! for pity's sake don't touch me.
[*Bursts out crying, and exit.*

(*Enter* MICHEL.)

Michel. The carriole is at the door.

Charles. What carriole?

Michel. The one you asked for in such a hurry.

Charles. Hurry? not at all. I shall stay, my good friend.

Michel (*surprised at his manner*). I hope that last wound is not affecting his head. You positively frighten me, Lieutenant.

Charles (*with strange vivacity*). My dear Michel, you love me?

Michel. As a brother.

Charles. Exactly. Let me be your brother. I want to marry your sister.

Michel. My sister! You, who were so anxious to go!

Ha! ha! ha! Toinette! (*calling*). Fifine, you sly young puss!

Charles. I hear them coming; I shall leave you for a moment. [*Exit.* *Re-enter* TOINETTE.

Michel. Fifine! I was calling Fifine, not you. Where is she?

Toinette. In her room, crying like a waterspout.

Michel. Poor child! a first love.

Toinette. You don't mean the Lieutenant?

Michel. Don't I? (*Enter* FIFINE, *crying.*) Fifine! dear Fifine! in tears! your eyes red! but we will soon bring back fine weather. So the Lieutenant loves you, and you?——

Toinette. I know the symptoms. I was just like this two years ago.

(CHARLES *seen at door listening.*)

Fifine. I love him, yes! with all my heart!

Michel. Bravo!

Fifine. But I will never marry him.

Michel. And what may be the impediment, if you please?

Fifine. Because I am the property of somebody else, and am left here to be called for.

Michel. Don't speak so loud. Certainly, that poor devil who—— a good fellow, no doubt. I should be glad to drink his health. But after two years! Come, be reasonable—he's dead.

Fifine. But I am engaged to him still.

Michel. Engaged to a man who isn't a man?

Fifine. Yes! I promised him when I gave my cross. Suppose he *did* come back, and found his widow, or whatever I am, married to another. I should die with shame.

Michel. But how can he come back?

Fifine. No matter. I will keep my word if I die for it. (CHARLES *rushes in.*)

Charles. Exactly as I wished. I have heard all. Fifine, and good friends, I am perfectly sane. Fifine, you love me? and if it were not for the other, you would be mine?

Fifine. With all my heart.

Charles. Good! *I* am that other.

All. You?

Charles. *I* received your cross. *I* took your brother's place—*I*, *I*—capital *I!* (*General surprise.*) But I kept my secret, wishing to prove myself worthy of you. By degrees I began to feel that it was monstrous you should be tied to a man whom you didn't know even by sight—that, perhaps, you loved another. I came to give you back your promise. But now I shall hold you to it. We love one another, and nothing can separate us.

Fifine. You have behaved shamefully, sir. I don't know that I will have you, after all. But come, sir, give me back my cross.

Charles (*confused*). Your cross?

Fifine. My cross—the evidence of our betrothal.

Toinette. Yes; why not give it at once?

Fifine. Surely you have not lost it?

Charles. No.

Michel (*whispering to Charles*). *You* haven't been making promises to another, I hope?

Charles (*very confused*). No—it is most unlucky; but I cannot.

Fifine. You cannot?

Charles. Indeed—indeed—I—I don't know where it is. But what does it matter when we love one another?

Fifine (*repelling him*). No! you are deceiving me. It was not you!

Charles. Do you doubt me?

Fifine. You have been plotting with my brother.

He has told you all. Shame on you, to take advantage of my love and break my heart!

Charles. Fifine!

Fifine. I will not listen to you. I will not look at you. I hate you.

(*Bursts into an agony of tears.*)

Charles. Just my old fortune! Michel, send me round the carriole again. I will go. [*Exit.*

Michel. Here's a pretty kettle of fish!

MICHEL *and Chorus*—("Oh, dear, what can the matter be?").

Oh, dear! what's to become of us?
I am half tempted to swear.
Oh, dear, you will send some of us
Mad as the maddest March hare!

Michel. Women are the root of all evil. So you are crying now?

Fifine. Yes. I shall love one man for ever, but I shall marry the other.

Toinette. Out of spite, I suppose?

Fifine. I could have forgiven him everything. But to deceive me—to pretend to be my poor, vagabond husband.

Michel. Bah! hearts and crosses are lost so easily, especially in the army.

(MUSIC, piano—"Very Fine and Large.")

(SERGT. POMPON *enters, much changed and dilapidated, walking with a crutch.*)

Pompon. Ladies, it is some time since I have had the pleasure. Permit me to salute you once more. (*General surprise.*) You do not recognize me? Slightly damaged, I admit. But, Attention! Eyes front! Head and neck erect! Chest advanced.

(*Shoulders crutch as a musket.*)

All. Why, it's Sergeant Pompon!

Pompon. The same—always Sergeant—past, present, and future.

Michel. And where have you been all this time?

Pompon. Frozen up in Russia.

Toinette. But the young man who went with you?

Fifine. Yes, the young man who took my brother's place?

Pompon. Just so. I bring a message from him.

All. From him?

Pompon. I made up a pretty speech, but I have forgotten it. I have lost my memory in Russia. But—in short—there is no young man. He has long since been in his last billet.

All. Dead?

Pompon. In these arms.

Fifine. There, now! How about your Lieutenant?

Michel. Be quiet, Fifine! Go on, Sergeant.

Pompon. Ah! what a Grenadier he was! Corporal in no time! At the Beresina——

Toinette. }
Fifine. } Ah! the Beresina?

Pompon. He fought like a demon. But I saw him fall, pierced by a dozen lances. Excuse this tear. I ran to him—he recognized me—and, lifting himself with pain from the body of a Russian Colonel, who was acting as his pillow, he murmured, "Comrade, it was you who brought me this cross, my sole treasure. Take it—it is all over with me. Give it back to Ma'mselle Fifine, telling her I kept it for her sake, while life lasted." And—here it is.

Fifine (*kissing the cross*). Yes! it is indeed my cross.

Pompon. Since then I have been eleven months in hospital, in splints and bandages. Pardon, Ma'mselle, but a Grenadier cannot be in two places at once.

Fifine. He is dead, then—and the other dares to take his place and claim his rights.

Pompon. How? Is there such a rascal living?

Toinette. A man who pretends he was the substitute for Michel.

Michel. Who insists upon it.

Fifine. And who wants to marry me!

Pompon. Infamous! Where is he?

Michel. In this very house.

Pompon (*with hand on sword*). I will speak a word with him.

Toinette. Take care! he is an officer.

Pompon. What of that?

Toinette. A brave man.

Pompon. So much the better. I shall run him through with the greatest satisfaction. (CHARLES *appears.* POMPON *rushes towards him with drawn sword.*) Ah! villain!

(CHARLES *turns towards him. They recognize each other.* POMPON *throws away his sword and embraces him.*)

Charles. Pompon!

Pompon. It is he!

All. The dead man!

Charles. Yes—recovered—always my luck—wounded hundreds of times—in the heart this time.

(*Embraces* FIFINE.)

Pompon. And recovered again!

Fifine. Forgive me, Charles. But I will make up for it by loving you twice over.

Pompon. As a Grenadier deserves.

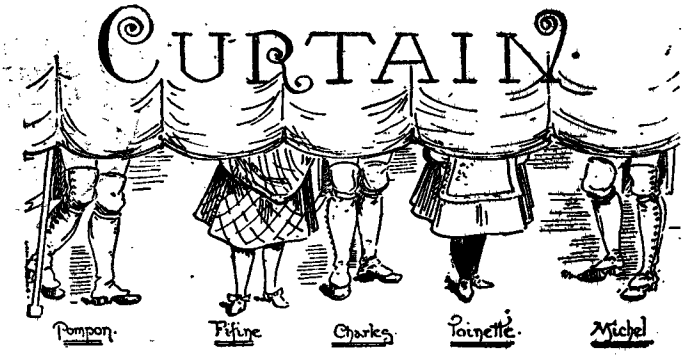
Fifine. Grenadier! No! Grena-*dearest!*

FINALE—"Billy Taylor."

Fifine. In my promise I persisted,
Happiness now shall be mine.
Charles. Yes! for I've again enlisted
In the matrimonial line.

Toinette. He who once hoists Cupid's pennant
Never, never claims discharge.
Michel. Then three cheers for our Lieutenant!
Pompon. Cheers all very fine and large!
Chorus. Tidde, idde, idde, i fol ido, &c., &c.

(*Dance.*) (*Curtain.*



THE MYSTERY OF A HANDSOME CAP.

AN ORIGINAL COMIC OPERETTA IN ONE ACT FOR THE DRAWING-ROOM.

Dramatis Personæ.

BOB BAGNET, a Grenadier.
DICK DOBBIN, his rival, a Carter.
DAME DURDEN.
LUCY BANTAM, her granddaughter.
CORPORAL and Four Soldiers.

Costumes.—Time of George II.

SCENE.—*The Dame's Cottage. A rustic interior. A window at back of Stage, showing open country. A table against the wall under the window. Door at back. A door at the side. An old-fashioned bureau. Fireplace. Table, chairs, &c. A cupboard by side of window, full of odds and ends.*

(*At rising of the Curtain,* LUCY *and* DAME *are discovered.* LUCY *holds a letter, which she has been reading to* DAME.)

SONG, *Lucy.* AIR, "*Laddie.*"

I.

Oh, Granny, there's Somebody coming,
And Somebody writes to me;
He is on his way, he'll be here to-day,
And possibly home to tea.

This Somebody's letter tells the news
Which Somebody loves to hear.

Dame. Then I'll change my cap, and I'll run and tap
That barrel of table beer!

Lucy. Oh! Granny, Granny, Granny!
Be kind to my Somebody;
And to please him most make some buttered toast,
And boil him an egg for tea!

II.

Oh, Granny, there's Somebody coming,
Of trouble be not afraid;
Our best cups lay on the Sunday tray,
And a big pot of marmalade.
For Somebody's appetite is keen,
So see that the bread is new.

Dame. With that bit of veal from last Thursday's meal,
I'll make him a tasty stew!

Lucy. Oh, Granny, Granny, Granny!
Be kind to my Somebody.

Dame. Ay, to crown success, a pen'north of cress,
And a pint of shrimps for tea!
Oh, Granny, &c., &c.

Dame. Deary me! and to think that you can read writing at your age!

Lucy. I can always read Bob's letters, Granny, though I do have to guess what his spelling means. He's still in the awkward squad of learning, and his pen can't do the goose step properly. Look here (*Showing letter*).

Dame. My dear, I can't make head or tail of those pothooks, especially when they hang on to nothing, and an't straight. I know the blots; they used to mean kisses when I was a girl.

Lucy. So they do now, Granny.

Dame. Ay, lass, but I used to like those messages given to me by word of mouth.

Lucy (*laughing*). Yes, and the bearer wait for an answer? But isn't it good news? Three cheers,

Granny! Bob's got his discharge, and is coming home for good! And we shall be able to get married now; and Bob will have a new commanding officer!

Dame. And I shall have a new cap for the wedding.

(*Knock at door.*)

Lucy. Perhaps that is Bob? (*Enter* DICK DOBBIN.) Oh, it's only you!

Dick. Yes, it's only me. I was taking the ould mare down to be shod in the village, so says I to myself, whilst that job's being done, why shouldn't I step in and say good morning to the prettiest girl as ever turned up her nose at a loving 'art.

Lucy. That's very kind of you; but we are busy this morning. We expect company.

Dame. And I must be seeing after the tea; there's no saying when he mayn't come. [*Exit* DAME.

Dick. Expect company, do ye now? And smock frocks *an't* company for the likes of you, be they? And I brought you these apples. There's rosy cheeks! (*Produces apples, and begins to munch one of them.*) Have a bite?

Lucy (*refusing apple*). Thank you, Dick. I'm sure that job must be finished by this time.

Dick (*after placing apples on table, offers half-eaten one again to Lucy*). Dang it all! won't ye taste 'em? Shall I go and bring you a bushel, and try you again? You know how I love you, and you look at me as if—— Coom up now! Have a bite, and be friends.

Lucy. Of course, I'm friends with you; but—— you know.

Dick. Yes, of course, I know it's that soldier. If I said here's a beautiful red coat, you would have fell in love with this apple. But it's sour enough now. (*Throws apple through window, and begins to cry. He continues crying all through the following song,* LUCY *looking at him and laughing aside.*)

SONG, *Dick Dobbin.* AIR, "*Tit-Willow.*"

I.

I'll pluck up my courage, and won't care a bit!
Though I bellow, I bellow, I bellow—
And it's all through *you*, nasty, deceitful young chit,
That I bellow, I bellow, I bellow!
Is it 'cos I'm too ugly you'll not be my bride?
Or you think that my head has got nothing inside?
Such behaviour I call most ridiculous pride,
And I bellow, I bellow, I bellow!

II.

You refuse all my presents, you're deaf when I sigh,
When I bellow, I bellow,
You are blind to my feelings, you laugh when I cry,
When I bellow, bel-bellow!
All my fondest affection you answer with sneers,
And I'm making a terrible slop, it appears,
For you'll want mop and pail, Miss, to swob up my tears
Lucy. { When I bellow, I bellow, I bellow!
{ Poor fellow! poor fellow! poor fellow!

Dick (*partially recovering himself and getting gradually angry*). Haven't I been loving of yer, and telling yer so ever since I don't know when; and yer must keep on saying "Whoa there!" when my 'art's bursting for yer! "Whoa there!" when I can't stop myself from loving of yer! "Whoa there!" when I bought yer a silver thimble, and wanted to try it on! "Whoa there!" when we hung up the mistletoe last Christmas! and when I offers yer a apple, "Whoa there!" again!

Lucy. Don't be angry, Dick. I can't help it. I am going to marry Bob. He's coming home—he's got his discharge.

Dick. Got his discharge, has he? and I've got mine!

Lucy (*trying to get rid of him*). Don't you think that job's done by this time, Dick?

Dick (*sulkily*). Yes! the job's done, sure enough. You've been hammering nails into my 'art, and I can't stand it—I won't bear it! There, now!

(*Throws apples out of window in a desperate rage. Whilst he is throwing them* BOB *appears passing the window, and ducks to avoid them. After the last apple is thrown* DICK *stands sulky, and* BOB, *in Grenadier's uniform, enters very gaily, and runs down to* LUCY.)

Bob. Hulloh! firing a salute in my honour, a volley of vegetable artillery? Never mind. Here I am again, safe and sound! (*Embrace.*)

Lucy. Oh, Bob! is it really you? and you've not been killed! and nobody can kill you now.

Dick (*aside*). I know somebody as would like to! (BOB *kisses* LUCY.) Whoa there!

Bob (*seeing him*). Hulloh! who's your friend?

Lucy. A poor silly fellow who is jealous.

Bob. A goose? I might have guessed that from his apple sauce. He ought to have sense enough to see he is in the way. (DICK *stands moodily by door, watching, and listening.*) But here I am for good, and here is my discharge! (*shows parchment*). Good-bye to powder and pipeclay!

Lucy (*examining it*). Why, it's like a bit of an old drum!

Bob. So it is! but no drum could beat so good a tune as that which makes me free to marry you. It's a sort of marriage settlement. Take care of it.

(LUCY *places it on table under window.*)

Lucy. Suppose it were lost—what then, Bob?

Bob. Why, they might arrest me as a deserter.

Dick (*to himself*). Whoa there!

Bob. What were you pleased to remark, my good man?

Dick. Nothing. I ain't a good man.

Bob. Well, no offence. I give you the benefit of the doubt, that's all. (*Opening door.*) It's a beautiful day for a walk.

Lucy. And really the job must be done by this time.

I'm so much obliged to you, Dick Dobbin, for thinking of me. Good-bye.

Dick. Yes, good-bye.

(*They force* DICK *out. He is seen at window, looking in, and shaking his fist at* BOB. LUCY *and* BOB *close door and come down.*)

Lucy. Thank goodness he's gone. Now then, sit down and tell me all about it. (*They sit.*)

Bob. Yes, and I'll take close order (*moves his chair close to* LUCY). But I'm too happy to talk (*kisses her*). It's a way we have in the army.

Lucy. But you're not in the army now.

Bob. No, but one's old habits do stick to you.

Lucy. Oh, then you've been practising the habit in Flanders, have you? (*moves her chair away*). Two paces to the right, if you please, *Mister* Bagnet.

Bob. Don't be so clever, Lucy. I mean the old habits before I was a soldier. Close up! (*She gradually comes closer—he kisses her again.*)

SONG, *Bob*, AIR, "*Queen of my Heart.*"

You think I have had flirtations
In my glorious campaign,
With the girls of other nations?
But, darling, let me explain—
From Emma, Florence, Susan, I have come back heart free;
And both Mary, Jane, and Poll in vain have set their caps at me.
For at all the Flemish maidens, as, of course, you would suppose,
I have with strict propriety turned up a scornful nose.
So we'll bid a good-bye to all sorrow,
I cannot be called on to fight;
The Banns I will put up to-morrow,
And marry my heart's delight!

Lucy. I'm glad that my Bob can say so,
The case is the same with me—
For I've loved you ev'ry day so,
I'm dreaming ever of thee!
A score of village lovers, young, middle-aged, and old,
I have frozen with denial, and have left out in the cold,

And on Ted, and George, and Harry, on Tom, and Bill, and Jack
I have most resolutely turned an uncongenial back.
But we'll bid a good-bye to all sorrow,
You cannot be called on to fight,
The Banns you will put up to morrow,
And marry your heart's delight!

(*Repeat refrain as a Duet.*)

(DICK *is seen looking in at the window.*)

Bob. And now we are to live happily ever afterwards. That's all settled.

Lucy. Of course it is. (DICK *takes parchment off the table, which he can just reach through window, and disappears flourishing the discharge vindictively.*) I have my wedding-dress all ready. I began to make it when I heard you were coming home. That's what Granny calls taking Time by the firelock.

(*Enter* DAME DURDEN.)

Dame. What! Bob!

Bob. To be sure, Granny. You do look blooming!

Dame. And what a man you've grown! And you're going to run away with my little lass now.

Bob. A soldier never runs away, Granny. I'm going to stick to my colours. Here they are! (*Kisses* LUCY.) I shall billet myself for ever in this village, and you, Granny, shall be our——

Dame. Yes! what shall I be?

Bob. Oh, you shall be a sentry over our chimney-corner as long as the old arm-chair has a leg to stand on.

Lucy. Yes! that you shall! Now that Bob has got his discharge——

Bob. That reminds me. We had better lock up the precious document. (*Goes to table.*) Why, it's gone!

Lucy. Nonsense! You saw it put on the table under the window. It must have slipped down. (*They search.*)

Bob. No, it hasn't; and it can't have blown away. (*Looks out of window.*)

THE LOST PARCHMENT.

Dame (*vaguely*). Perhaps it's the cat?

Lucy. You don't know what you are talking about, Granny. It's Bob's character.

Dame. Bob lost his character? Deary me! Not in this house?

Lucy. Yes; in this room. Help me to find it. (*Dame very much puzzled.* BOB *and* LUCY *running about nervously.*) It's a written character, Granny, and it has flown away!

Bob (*throwing himself on floor, and looking between the boards*). Perhaps it has slipped between the boards—they are gaping like a money-box. No! I can't see it—there's nothing but draught and dust down there. (*Rises.*)

CATCH, "*Three Blind Mice.*"

Three blind mice!
See how we run!
The place, it seems is with mischief rife—
We all want eyes as sharp as a knife—
Did you ever see such a hunt in your life,
Oh, three blind mice!

Dame. Deary me! it's very strange. (*Takes candlestick from mantelpiece and unwraps piece of paper from candle end.*) This ain't it, I suppose?

Bob (*at cupboard emptying rag-bag*). Perhaps it's in here. (BOB *and* LUCY *turn out various things in great excitement.*)

Dame. I'll have a good rummage after tea, my dears. But I must get the kettle off my mind.

[*Exit* DAME.

Lucy. Not a sign of it! Oh, Bob! what shall we do? I feel so upset. (*Subsides into chair on one side of the stage*, BOB *subsides on the other side.*)

Bob. And everything else is upset too! We've made hay of the cupboard, and the thing's as clean gone as yesterday!

(DICK DOBBIN *appears at door and stands, with a reckless expression, leaning against door-post and looking at them.*)

Dick. Whoa there! Is marriage a failure?

Lucy (*sits sobbing*). What do *you* want here again?

Dick. I just looked in to see how you two was getting on. It's in my way.

Bob. It's you who are in our way, fellow.

Dick. Daresay I am. What's the matter? you ain't going to begin a spring cleaning, are you? or chasing black-beetles? It's a funny amusement for two loving 'arts as keeps company. (*Comes down to* LUCY.) Lucy, lass, what ails you? Let me help to tidy up the place.

Lucy. Dick, you've been drinking.

Dick. Only a drop to wish good luck to you and him; seemingly, I didn't have enough to do you much good.

Lucy. We're in trouble, Dick. We've lost Bob's discharge.

Dick. Have ye now? Who could have took it? (*Grinning stupidly.*)

Bob. That's the mystery. There's been nobody here and it's gone. You haven't seen it on the road, have you?

Dick. No; I've not seen it.

Lucy (*after noticing* DICK'S *confusion*). Dick, you're not telling the truth. I can see by your face. I believe *you* took it.

Dick. Do ye now? How clever girls are! they can see through a brick wall.

Lucy. I can see through you. I'm sure you did. Nobody else could be so spiteful. Bob! he has got it! Make him give it up. (*Goes to the door, and stands with her back against it.* BOB *comes to* DICK *and threatens him.*)

Dick. Whoa there! don't touch me!

Bob. Give it up, you scoundrel! or I'll shake the life

out of you! (*Collars* DICK, *who throws him off and spars at him.*)

Dick. Whoa there! Two can play at that game. I'll spoil your beauty for you, Mister Soldier.

(*They prepare to fight, turning up their sleeves, &c.* LUCY *comes down between them.*)

Lucy. They are going to fight for me! Horror! I shall be the Maid of the *Mill.*

(DICK *rushes at* BOB, *who knocks him down.* DICK *lies still with hand to his face.* BOB *stands on the other side of the stage in a threatening attitude.* LUCY *between them sings*):

SONG. AIR, "*The Maid of the Mill.*"

Dobbin, Dobbin, surely you have your master found,
I think you will be wiser not to try another round;
Few men have such a biceps, none can strike as hard as he,
And I think to-morrow morning this your doleful song will be:
"Do not upset me! do not upset me!
Think of the Doctor's bill!
How my hand shakes! and how all of me aches;
That's what I have made of the *Mill!*
Do not upset me!
That's what I've made, what I've made of the *Mill.*"

Bob. Yes, the grand result is:

CHORUS—"*Two Lovely Black Eyes.*"

Two lovely black eyes!
Head, oh, what a size!
Only for standing up not very long,
Two lovely black eyes!

Bob. And serve him right!

Dick (*mopping his face with handkerchief*). And you served the left just the same.

Bob. Are you going to tell me what you did with my discharge? Oh, you won't speak, won't you? Then I shall look for myself. (*Tears open* DICK'S *smock frock, and finds the parchment.*)

Lucy. I knew it!

Bob (*forcing* DICK *on to his feet*). Stand up, you sneak!

Dick. Whoa there! whoa there!

Bob. No, I won't dirty my hands by hitting you again. But if ever you dare to speak to me or Lucy, or come prowling about this cottage, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life. If you had as many eyes as there are in a peacock's tail, I'd blacken the lot for you. Now go! (*Exit* DICK, *to refrain of chorus, played piano.*) There! I think we've seen the last of friend Dobbin, Lucy.

Lucy. It was done out of jealousy, Bob; and I expect he had been down at the "King's Arms," and was so proud of his cunning that he could not help coming back out of sheer bravado.

Bob. Well, all's well that ends well, lass. If he hadn't been such an idiot, we might have lost the parchment.

Lucy. But we won't lose it again, Bob.

Bob. No, Lucy. It was you who found it, so you had better take care of it. I was in a marching regiment, and it seems that my discharge likes to be always on the move. We must chain it up, Lucy, like a dog.

Lucy. I know. I'll put it in this bureau. See if there's anybody looking. (*She goes to the bureau and opens it, whilst* BOB *looks out at doors, and through window.*)

Bob (*returning*). All's safe.

Lucy. This is my particular hiding-place for your old letters, Bob. Your discharge will be quite at home with them. There! (*Places parchment in bureau.*)

Bob. How about the key?

Lucy. I'll find it by and by, Bob. You shall help me to look for it.

Bob. Hang it, Lucy! They say the service is going to the dogs, and now you want to make a retriever of *me!*

Lucy. Nonsense, Bob. At any rate it's a comfort to know where a thing is. It's in there—

SONG, *Lucy.* AIR, "*To be there.*"

Things easily get lost as well you know,
They are very often dropped upon the floor,
They are kicked about the room by ev'ry toe,
And found at last behind the cellar door.

They get mixed with the ashes in the grate,
They are sometimes blown across the square;
If you take my advice, you will never lose it twice,
We are positively certain it is there!

(*Pointing to bureau*) { It's in there!
Safe in there!

If you take my advice, you will never lose it twice,
We are positively certain it is there!

(BOB *joins* LUCY *in refrain.*)

Bob. You're sure it's all right? or do you think I had better sit upon it till you find the key?

Lucy. What an idea! When I want you to take me for a walk round the village whilst Granny is getting tea ready. We mustn't hurry the old lady too much, and I shall be proud for the neighbours to see you, Bob.

Bob. Come along, Lucy, if you're sure it's safe.

Lucy. You are not afraid of Dick Dobbin again, are you? (*Puts on her hat and goes to side door calling.*) Granny, we shall be back directly. Now then, Bob, quick march!

(*They go out at door, and are seen to pass the window laughing.* DAME *peeps in from side door. She is without her cap on her head, but carries a new one in her hand. Comic effect of bare head and an evidently false front. She goes across to window, and peeps out.*)

Dame. There they go! I am glad to have the place to myself for a few moments. This cap is on my mind,

and I must look as well as I can for Bob's sake. Soldiers are so particular. (*Gets looking-glass and tries on cap.*) It's a very becoming cap, this is, I know—but what I want is a little stiffening to make it sit properly. I must find something. It won't do as it is. (*Looking round room.*) No, the cupboard won't help me. A bit of strong paper would do beautifully. Ah! there's the bureau. I might find what I want it there. (*Opens bureau, and fumbles among papers, &c.*) Papers—nasty flimsy things!—no good. Ah! the very thing! (*Finds parchment, closes bureau, sits and arranges parchment inside her cap for a stiffening. Then gets looking-glass, and admires the effect of cap.*) It's a kindness to make use of such rubbish. There, now! I don't care who sees me! It's really most becoming—who would think I was a Granny now?

SONG, *Dame.* AIR, "*Flowers that Bloom in the Spring.*"

This nice ribbon under my chin,
Tra la,
Most thoroughly alters the case,
Tra la;
I have but to put in a pin,
Tra la,
And thanks to the stiffness within,
Tra la,
Sure I have a sweet frame for my face
Pray who is so old that you count it a sin,
If she has a new ribbon tied under her chin?
Tra la, tra la, la,
Can it really be thought a sin,
This ribbon tied under my chin?

(DAME *gets flour dredger, and improves her complexion, admiring herself in the glass.*)

Some flour for bloom on the skin,
Tra la,
This dredger will easily place,
Tra la,

There's none of my kith or my kin,
Tra la,
If they happened by chance to pop in,
Tra la,
But would recognize juvenile grace.

Pray, who is so old that you count it a sin
If she dredges the flour for bloom on the skin?
Tra la, la, la, &c.;
Can it really be thought a sin,
This flour for bloom on the skin?

Deary me! I must be off—it's the kettle's turn to sing now, and my business to poke the fire between the bars. (*Sings*) Granny, put the kettle on; Granny, put the kettle on, it's time for tea! [*Exit side door.*

(*Re-enter* BOB *and* LUCY, *laughing.*)

Bob. It was a joke to see our friend Dobbin with his eye in a sling amongst his boon companions at the "King's Arms"!

Lucy. Yes! and how he slunk away when his kind friends pointed you out to him, and how his friends laughed!

Bob. Of course they did. There is nothing more amusing than the sight of one's friend's discomfiture. A black eye on a neighbour's face is a fine target for the small shot of the village tongues!

(*Enter* DAME *with tea-things, &c.*)

Lucy. Now, Bob, help me to lay the cloth. I suppose you didn't trouble much about table-cloths in Flanders?

Bob. No. I feel inclined to sit on the ground, and make a table of my knees.

(*They busy themselves in laying the table,* BOB *being very clumsy, and being set right by* LUCY.)

Lucy. You're not used to plates either, I fancy? or knives?

Bob. No—and I'm not accustomed to be waited on by a pretty girl. But I don't complain. I like to make the best of everything.

Dame. And you shall have the best of everything, Bob, as far as we can get it. Now for the tea-pot.

[*Exit* DAME, *side door.*

Bob. Granny is looking wonderfully well and happy, Lucy.

Lucy. Yes; she has dressed herself for the occasion. It's a gala day with us, you know. Now, you must sit down here by me, and be very hungry, and Granny shall serve out the rations.

(*Enter* DAME *with tea-pot, and takes her seat, pouring out tea, &c., and attending to* BOB.)

Lucy. That is jolly, isn't it, Granny?

Dame. That it be, lass (*busying herself at table*). Sugar, Bob? Two lumps, one for Lucy, one for yourself. (*Puts two lumps into* BOB'S *cup.*)

Bob. Granny, you're very complimentary. Shall I pass the butter?

Dame. Why, Bob, don't I remember when you used to run round this tea-table with your head just above the tray, and your little fingers pawing at the sugar-basin, just like a dog swimming! Don't I remember when you were bigger, and your elbows always coming through your jacket-sleeves, how you loved to play at soldiers, and pretended to be the Duke of Marlborough, with the rolling-pin; and how you used to take the cat prisoner, and handcuff her with the snuffers! Deary me! and now you're a grown man, and have got all your fighting done, and can turn your bayonet into a toasting-fork! Try an egg, Bob. I got it laid on purpose for you, boy.

Bob (*eating with a good appetite*). Thanks, Granny. I *am* enjoying myself!

(*Hands up empty tea-cup.* DAME *looks into it attentively.*)

Dame. That's right, boy. Now I'll tell your fortune in your cup.

Lucy. It must be a happy one, Granny.

Dame (*mysteriously*). But there's a stranger in it. Now, who can that be?

Lucy. A stranger? coming here?

Dame. That there be. Look at him—there he is—I never knew a tea-cup to tell wrong.

SONG AND CHORUS. AIR, "*Cup of Tea*" (*Genevieve de Brabant*).

Dame. Some there are who telling fortunes
From the cards know what will be;
Gipsies in your hands can see it,
But I can read your luck in tea;
If you think I'm wrong,
You need not wait long—
In a moment you
Find my words come true—
Plain as A. B. C.
There is a stranger in your tea!

Bob. And suppose there is a stranger,
Granny, what's the odds to me?
Has my spoon stirred lurking danger
In this harmless cup of tea?
Granny, you are wrong—
This old woman's song,
With all respect to you,
Never can come true—
Fiddle-de-dee!
There is no stranger in my tea!

[*Repeat chorus, clinking their spoons against empty tea-cups.* LUCY *sings* BOB'S *verse.* DAME *repeats her own.*)

Bob. Well, he can't hurt us, Granny, whoever he may be.

Lucy. Nobody can hurt us now, Bob. We're too happy. I know I'm too happy to eat a morsel.

Bob. Don't say that, Lucy, or Granny will think I'm very miserable, if we are to be judged by our appetites. Look at the toast I am getting through! Yes—I will take another cup, Granny, and I'll swallow the stranger!

Dame (*finding tea-pot empty*). Then we must have some hot water first, Bob.

[*Exit, with tea-pot, side door.*

Bob. Poor old Granny! what a silly old woman's tale! (*Knock at door. Both start.*)

Lucy. Oh, Bob! the stranger!

(*Enter* CORPORAL *and* SOLDIERS.)

Corp. Halt! order arms! Private Robert Bagnet, of the Royal Fusiliers!

Bob (*startled*). Yes, that's me—*late* of the Royal Fusiliers.

Corp. From information received, I have been ordered to apprehend you as a deserter. You are my prisoner.

Bob. What?

Lucy. What? a prisoner?

Bob. Nonsense, Corporal. This is all a mistake. I have my discharge. I'm not a soldier.

Lucy. Certainly not—and you are trespassing. Indeed, Mister Corporal, he has his discharge.

Corp. Old birds are not to be caught by such chaff as that. Let me see it.

Bob. Show it him, Lucy. It's in there,

Lucy (*going to bureau*). Of course it is.

(LUCY *is fumbling among papers, and throwing them out.*)

Bob (*very impatient*). Come, come, Lucy. Find it, lass.

Lucy (*hysterically*). It has gone!

Bob (*rushing to bureau and flinging about everything*). Gone! again! We are all bewitched.

Corp. I thought so. This story won't do for the Grenadiers, my fine fellow.

Lucy. It's not a story—it's the truth!

Bob. It is. I take my oath it was there half an hour ago!

Corp. Private Robert Bagnet——

Bob. Don't Private me! I refer you to the Commander-in-Chief—he will remember having signed my discharge.

Corp. Produce the document! (CORPORAL *produces handcuffs, and holds them in readiness.*)

Bob. Don't you see I can't.

Lucy. I know who has done this. Dobbin has given information out of spite, although he knew you were discharged.

Corp. Duty is duty, Miss; and it is my duty to march off Private Robert Bagnet under escort. (*To Soldiers.*) Shoulder arms!

(*Soldiers range themselves on each side of* BOB.)

Lucy (*in an agony*). One moment, Mister Corporal.

(*Enter* DAME, *side door, with tea-pot. She starts on seeing the state of affairs, and drops tea-pot, with a scream.*)

Dame. The stranger! I told you so! Whatever is the matter, soldier?

Corp. Sorry to disturb the harmony of the tea-table, Dame; but Private Robert Bagnet——

Dame (*interrupting angrily*). He's not a Private—he's a private gentleman—he's got his discharge.

Corp. Private Robert Bagnet being unable to produce any documentary evidence of the fact, is my prisoner on the charge of desertion.

Dame. Oh, you wicked man to say so! and my best china tea-pot broke past all riveting through you! Oh, Bob! what will they do with you?

Corp. (*to Soldiers*). To the right face!

Dame (*intercepting* CORP.). You sha'n't do it, soldier.

Corp. (*leading her aside*). Come, old lady, it can't be helped; sit down, and keep your temper.

Dame (*with gradually increasing anger*). I sha'n't sit down. I sha'n't keep my temper! I wish I was a man, I'd desert you! I would—I would—there! there! there!

(*In her excitement tears off her cap, and belabours* CORPORAL *about the head and face. He defends himself,*

laughing. At last he seizes the cap, and DAME *subsides, panting, into chair.*)

Corp. The old lady's cap will be past all riveting, I fancy. (*Tries to put the cap into proper shape. In so doing, he finds the discharge inside cap.*) Eh? why, what's this? (*General surprise and excitement.*) Escort, front! Order arms! Stand at ease! Your discharge, Private Bagnet—all right and regular (*examining parchment*), and not a stain on your character. Old lady, explain.

Dame. Wait till I get my breath, Mister Soldier.

Lucy. Of course, it's right and regular, Corporal. Hasn't it come from headquarters?

Dame. I didn't mean to do any harm. You know *that*, Bob and Lucy. But I can't read, Mister Corporal, and I wanted some stiffening for my new cap, and I found that bit of stuff, which was just what I wanted. Deary me! who'd have thought there would be all this fuss about a bit of parchment.

Corp. I'm sure, I'm very sorry for the mistake. I've often heard tell of the cloud with a silver lining; this cap business reminds me of it.

Bob (*laughing*). Oh, Granny! you do take funny things into your head sometimes.

Lucy. Never mind, Bob, we know the whole mystery now.

Dame. Yes, the Mystery of a Handsome Cap! (*Curtseys to* CORPORAL, *who salutes* DAME.)

Lucy. Bob, attention; present arms! (*Holds out her arms for embrace.* DICK *runs in, his eye bandaged, and he wears a bunch of ribbons in his hat as a recruit.*)

Dick. Whoa there! whoa there, Corporal! whoa there everybody! I've been looking for you everywhere. I wanted to tell you it was all right. I stole the discharge, and gave the information, thinking to punish Bob; but Bob punished my head and took the parchment back.

I'm sorry now ; not because of the keepsake Bob gave my eye, but because I was a sneak. Bob's a good fellow, and now I've 'listed, I'm going to behave like a soldier, and say I'm sorry for what I've done. (CORPORAL *slaps him on back.* BOB *shakes his hand.*) You'll have a bite now, Lucy? (*Produces an apple, and gives it to* LUCY. *She bites it, and hands it back to* DICK, *who munches it during the finale.*) Let all end *apple-ly !*

FINALE. CHILDREN'S SONG, "*This is the Way.*"

This is the way we end our play,
End our play,
End our play ;
This is the way we end our play,
With a general dance and chorus.

And this is the way you clap your hands,
Clap your hands,
Clap your hands ; (*to audience*)
This is the way you clap your hands
At our general dance and chorus !

Curtain.

BEAUTIFUL HELEN:

A STORY OF PARIS.

A DOMESTIC TRAGEDY FOR THE THEATRE ROYAL, BACK DRAWING-ROOM.

Dramatis Personæ.

MENELAÜS (King of Sparta, husband of the beautiful Helen).

PARIS (son of Priam. Something like a Trojan).

TYNDARUS (ex-King of Sparta—a retiring old gentleman).

CHORUS (consisting of Ὁ παις ἐν βυττονοις, the Usual Nurse, the Under Nurse, the Nursery Maid, the Nursery Governess, the Butler, the Housemaid where a Footman is kept, the Footman, the Cook (man or woman cook), the Scullery Maid, the Housekeeper, the Ladies' Maid, and in fact all the domestics and followers, if allowed.[1]

HELEN (wife of Menelaüs).

HERMIONE (daughter of Helen and Menelaüs, aged two years).

LÆDA (wife of Tyndarus, ex-Queen of Sparta, Mother of Helen, Grandmother of Hermione, Mother-in-Law of Menelaüs, Aunt to several people who don't appear in the Drama, Cousin to a few others not in the play, Sister to somebody who is not "on the stage," and that's all.

Costume.—The dresses may be either classical and correct, and incorrect, but still classical. Strange as it may appear, the latter will be probaby adopted by the learned and energetic Thespians, who propose to themselves the representation of this beautiful Tragedy.

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[1] None of these, with the exception of Ὁ παις and Nurse, are necessary; they will only have to agree, in Strophé and Antistrophé, with their representatives, who are the two servitors above mentioned. If it is thought advisable, the entire audience may at intervals take up the burden of the Chorus, being thereto duly instructed "By these presents" (Christmas presents, of course), and having finished, may return to their seats, and allow the Tragedy to develop itself.

SCENE.—*Interior of the Country House of* MENELAÜS, *in Laconia, some little way from Sparta. Door* C.; *Windows* R. *and* L. *of door. The view through door and window is of cultivated plains, terminated by far-distant hills. Stunted willows show where a river runs just outside the neatly-trimmed garden, on to which the door in* C. *opens. The room is elegantly furnished. Chairs, tables, and a harp.*

(*Enter the Chorus.*)

('O παις, *bearing a tray of refreshments, enters by* R.H. *door. If there are any more of the Male Domestic Chorus, they will follow him.*)

Air.—"*Cork Leg*" *chorus, part first.*

Male Chorus. With my tooral, looral, looral, looral,
Tiddy fol looral,
Ri tol looral li do.

The rest, if any. With {his / our} Tooral, looral, looral, &c.

Male Chorus. I'm Chorus in Buttons, my name is Ho Paîs,
And this is the sherry, and soda, and ice,
With biscuits as I'm bringing in werry nice,
My Master his appetite to entice.
Ri tooral,

Nurse and Female Chorus. Looral,

Male Chorus. Looral, looral,

Nurse and Female Chorus. Tiddy fol looral,

Male and Female Chorus together. Ri tol looral li do.

(*End of Chorus. All strike Grecian statuesque attitudes.*)

Male Chorus. I am Ho Paîs, the Buttons and Male Chorus,
(*To audience*). Now say we know whom we have got before us.

Female Chorus. Your forwardness, young lad, is reprehensible,

I'm Female Chorus, and quite indispensable
To the Greek drama.

Male Chorus. You should, nurse, be tellin'
The people that you're Nurse to Mistress Helen,
The wife of Menelaüs, King of Sparta,
That is your art.

Female Chorus. My art is coming arter,
Yes, I'm nurse of Menelaüs' darter,
Hermione, and all that's to be told
Of her, is that she's scarcely two years old—
An infant, and some seven minutes later
You'll see her out in her perambulator.
Well, for myself——

Male Chorus. Pooh, ! pooh ! it's my turn, madam.
I, as you may observe, a comely lad am
Servant to Menelaüs, Spartan king.

(*Enter* MENELAÜS R.H., *in a country lounging suit, languidly smoking a cigarette.*)

Menelaüs. Don't chatter. When I want you I will sing.

Male and Female Chorus (*speaking together majestically, and working their arms in true classic fashion*).
O thou great King of Sparta's hardy land.

Mene. (*interrupting, and suggesting an idea that will at once get rid of them*).
I think that that's an "exit cue for band."
(*Orchestra gives a chord.*)

Male and Female Chorus (*going* R. *and* L., *and moving their arms in time*).
With our tooral, looral,
Looral, looral,
Tiddy fol looral,
Ri fol looral LI DO.

(*They make a grand and effective finish, and exeunt* R. *and* L.)

Mene. (*solus, taking a seat, and during the speech nibbling a biscuit, and sipping his sherry and soda*).
Charming to be alone, and in this manner
Enjoy the country air and mild Havannah.
Alas! to sniff the breezes sweet and fragrant
Is for the peasant or the sturdy vagrant,
While kings to cities bound by state affairs,
Are not allowed to give themselves such airs.
But here I am, and here I'm like to be,
In maiden meditation fancy free,
Until (*something tickles the tip of his nose: he raises his hand to whisk it off, whatever it is*) Until—a fly—(*it bothers him again*) Until (*annoyed*) dear me!
That's not a fly. Is it a *wasp?* It *be.*
(*Gets up, with pocket-handkerchief in his hand.*)
No, it's a gnat; indoors, it may be said,
One doesn't want *a gnat* upon one's head.
(*Music. Aiming a blow at it, as it audibly buzzes about the room.*)
The poet calls it trumpeter; I warn it
That if—a trumpeter—why, it's a hornet.
You trumpet, do you. Well, we'll come to blows.
(*Attacks it. Music. He makes a blow at it with his handkerchief. Enter* HELEN C. *The handkerchief flicks her face. Chord. Awkward pause.*)
Mene. (*apologetically*). Helen, upon my word——
Helen (*annoyed*). Upon my nose.
Mene. Would you allow a hornet——
Helen. Oh, who'd care!
Mene. To *sting* me *'ear* while *I*, ma'am, was *s'tting there.* (*Pointing to chair.*)
Helen. Sting! Of that pun I hope you are ashamed.
Mene. 'Tis my wild genius that can *not* be tamed.
Helen. "Who'd make a pun would pick a pocket."
Mene. (*knowing the quotation*). Johnson's;
The Learned Doctor for that once talked nonsense,

(*Suddenly remembering that he had been guilty of a slight anachronism.*)

What can *you* know of Johnson?

Helen (*pettishly*). Oh, don't fuss.
English to others, dear, is *Greek* to us.

Mene. Well, I'll not quarrel with you, 'tis too hot.

Helen. Quarrel, indeed! I hope that you will not.

Mene. Well, if I like to quarrel, I may do it
Without your leave.

Helen. Of course, my dear, I knew it.
I knew you'd have a row. In fact, I doubt
Whether you'd let a day pass by without.

Mene. Well, let it drop.

Helen (*walking*). Oh, drop, indeed, sir!

Mene. (*coolly*). Pshaw!
How you remind me of my ma'-in-law.

Helen. Abuse my ma', of course! You treat with laughter her.

Mene. Well, dear, the daughter takes a little after her.

Helen. If you my manners, sir, so much repel,
I'll *take myself off* after her as well.
Oh, I've no doubt I bore you.

Mene. Bore me! nay——

Helen (*in a greater temper*). So
If you would have me leave you, p'raps you'll say so.

DUET.

AIR.—*Opening Chorus in* LES HUGUENOTS (*name not at this moment to be recollected*).

Helen. Say so! say so!
You're a nice fellow to say so.

Mene. Pray sew. Pray sew.
Do not go on in this way so.

Helen. Stay! sew! stay! sew!
Emigrate to Valparaiso
I will,
And fill
Men with the tale of my woe.

Mene. Hel-en !
Belle en-
-chanting to me beyond tellen'.
Hel-en
Fell en-
-ticing siren ! do not go !
Helen (*running up the chromatic scale*).
Go-o-o-o-o-o-o ?
Mene. (*running down the chromatic scale*).
No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o !
Both. Oh !
Say so ! say so !
I'm / You're } a nice fellow to say so.
Mene. (*fondly suggesting*). Pray sew ! Pray sew !
Helen (*contemptuously*). Pray ! sew ! Pray ! sew !
Both to one another. Do not go on in this way so.
Stay so ! stay sew !
Emigrate to Valparaiso
I / You } will,
And fill
Men with tale of { my / your } woe.

(*During the above,* MENELAÜS *has gradually become more and more softened, but* HELEN *remains capricious. At the finish she is going, when he prevents her.*)

Mene. Forgive me, Helen, if I have offended.

Helen. Oh, very well; least said is soonest mended.
(*They shake hands, and embrace.*)
And as it wasn't *my* fault at the first of it——

Mene. And as you, after all, *did* get the worst of it—

Helen. *I* get the worst! You owned yourself defeated——

Mene. (*annoyed*). I! 'Pon my word, to be thus coolly treated
Is much, a deal too much for human natur.

(*Enter* NURSE L.H., *with* MISS HERMIONE *in perambulator of the period.*)

Nurse. Here's Miss Hermione's perambulator;
She is a going out.

Mene. My child! my child!
Although your ma' did drive me crazy, wild,
Yet she's your mother! And I couldn't *buy* any
One like my Helen!

Nurse (*to Baby*). Sit up, Miss Hermione!

Mene. Come to your husband, who has oft beguiled away
The tears that trickled——

(*Both, in rushing towards one another, run against the perambulator.*)

Helen (*pettishly*). Oh, do take the child away.

NURSE (*as Female Chorus apart,*[1] *using the majestic action of the*

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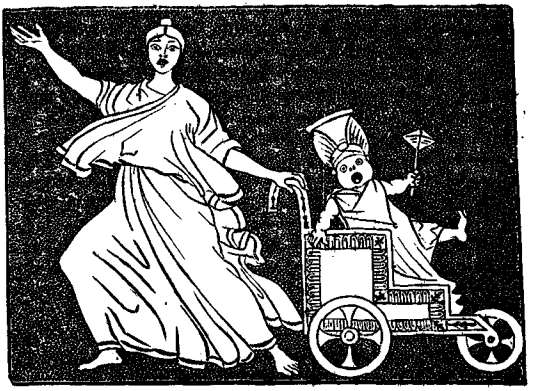
[1] The reader will call to mind the functions of the Chorus in the Greek drama: it was the mouthpiece of the audience, giving expression to the opinion and sentiments of the spectators—that is, such opinions and sentiments as the spectators should have held, if anything like decent citizens. This plan must have saved a vast amount of the conversation in the stalls and boxes, which, if delivered audibly during the progress of the play, is so detrimental to the comfort of the audience and a proper understanding of the plot. Some people who've "seen the play before," will insist upon forestalling the situations. Such conduct is classical, as Chorus, but unclassical to a degree in a mere patron

Ancients. Vide Dr. Donaldson's Drama of the Greeks, or any book of Antiquities—say Smith's.)

Such conduct sure as *this* is
'Twixt Master and my Missis,
After what seemed to be,
By all deemed to be,
A precious quarrel.



THE NURSE AS CHORUS.

of the drama in the front of the house. The scene, for instance, has been increasing in intensity; the villains have telegraphed to one another, frowned, placed their hands on their daggers ominously, and made their respective exits. Maude is left alone. Alone! The lights are turned down, and you settle yourself in your seat for something terrible and sensational. At this point your choral friend leans over to you, and says, in a loud whisper:

"She's going to be stabbed now: by Ralph."

You nod your head, as much as to say that you're very much obliged for the information, and would be glad if he'd hold his tongue. The hint is lost on your communicative companion.

"She turns out to be his child, you know, after all."

"You saw that fellow at the window, didn't you?"

"S-s-s-s-s-h!" says every one, deeply interested, and the whisperer leans back in his seat with an air of pity for those who would rather listen to the dialogue than his information.

Your interest in the piece, however, is for the present destroyed.

The Chorus needs
From out these deeds
(My Master being badgered, he
Hates domestic tragedy)
To point the moral.
Now, O ye gods! in high Olympian bloom,
Who, knowing both the slave's and master's doom
Mark these (*pointing to* MENELAÜS *and* HELEN) and this (*to* HERMIONE)——

Helen. Oblige me! leave the room!

Nurse. The Chorus, madam, ne'er from duty shrinks.

(*Is about to begin again. Child cries.* MENELAÜS *takes one step towards her, and the* NURSE *with grand majestic action*—"*incedit Regina*"[1]—*walks out of the room.*)

Helen. I'm very much afraid that party drinks.

Mene. Here, far away from regal state and toils,
Let us not spoil our meal-times with our *broils*;
Such an example to that child of ours,
If she were old enough to use her powers
Of imitation——

Helen. If that *were* so, I
Would not exhibit *broils* to our small *fry*.

(*During this conversation* MADAME HELEN *gets to work at her Grecian sewing-machine;* MENELAÜS *takes up a newspaper.*[2]

[1] Pronounced in Italian fashion, the Latin "c" is softened in "ch" and gives the notion of "Every *inch* a queen."

[2] The young aspirant for Thespian honours must not read this tragedy off as if the mere getting of the lines by head were sufficient. No; he must *get them by heart* as well: that is, as the poet says,

"He or she,
As the case may be,"

must be so thoroughly imbued with the sentiments of the character he or she personates, as to be thoroughly identified with the person represented. Tommy may play Menelaüs, may be dressed as Menelaüs, so may Dick or Harry; but if he feel not as Menelaüs, then will the end of the dramatic purpose remain unachieved.

Mene. (*reading paper*).
Hem! "Fashionable movements." Your mamma
Is somewhere travelling with your papa.
The ex-king Tyndarus with his ex-queen,
Læda, have wand'ring through the country been;
Incog. of course; as yet we cannot learn
When their ex-majesties are to return.
Helen. Who'd have suspected them of this?
Mene. Læda's caper!
'Tis written as a *Leader* in the paper.
She won't come here, because she doesn't know
Where we are living. You've not told her.
Helen. No;
For I have often heard you kindly say
You're better pleased the farther ma's away.
Mene. Precisely; although I'd like her much, my dear,
If the old lady wouldn't interfere.
And as for poor old Tyndarus, if he
In years gone by allowed himself to be
Deceived by love, that amorous Divine,
Why (*seeing* HELEN *look angry, shrugs his shoulders*)—
Well, well, well, it's no affair of mine.
What's done can *not* be helped, a proverb neat
That's true of everything save things to eat.
Helen. How "things to eat?" P'raps you'll just mention one.

This note is here deposited (*i.e.*, placed *down* at the foot of the page) instead of interlarding the dialogue with italicised "business." There can be no need for saying (as, if the piece were improperly understood, would be positively necessary), "Here Ulysses takes out his pocket-handkerchief, draws on his gloves, tries the effect of sugar in his sherry and soda, breaks a biscuit, stirs his drink," and so forth, if the actor will only conscientiously study the part allotted to him. Be it also remarked that the parts of Chorus are by no means to be despised. Let not histrionic talent be nasally elevated at the Page.

Mene. Beef. You can't "help it" if it isn't "done."
(*Pleased with himself for this playful illustration of his Proverbial Philosophy.*)
Now, dear, let's take a turn.
Helen. Oh, very well.
(*Bell rings.*)
Mene. What's that?
Helen. I fancy 'tis the outer bell—
The gate bell; p'raps the butcher or the grocer.
(*Enter* PAGE R.H.,[1] *looking pale.*)
Mene. Is it the fishmonger or baker?
Page. No, sir.
Mene. Speak, slave, at once, and don't affect my nerves.
You're pale.
Helen. Speak, boy, you've been at the preserves.
Page. I've not, I swear! But, O, Mum, I've see'd her.
Mene. Whom?
Helen. Speak!
Page. I can't; but here's the card.
Both. Ah! Læda!!
(MENELAÜS *faints in* HELEN'S *arms.*)
Helen. He faints! (*Music.*)
Page (*as Chorus*). He swoons! ye gods! And halts
His pulse. She now presents her salts.
(*Describing the action.*)
Ill o'er this house is broodin'.
Sad place to take my food in.
Læda approaches dreadful.
Of plots and plans a headful.

Αἰ αἰ παπαι παπαι,

We must mourn and sigh; but why
You (*to audience*) can't say, no more can I.
[*Exit* PAGE *majestically, as* CHORUS. *Chord.*

[1] R.H. means right hand, H.R.H. means his Royal Highness.

Mene. (*arousing himself*). Where am I?
Helen. Here.
Mene. The very information
That I required. Of my situation
The horrors are astoundingly appalling.
(*Makes as if he were going to faint again.*)

MENELAÜS FAINTS IN THE ARMS OF HELEN ON RECEIVING THE FEARFUL INTELLIGENCE.

Helen (*refusing to catch him*).
Don't! or I cannot answer for your falling.
Mene. She's come! she's here! That pallid trembling youth
Announced in feeble words the awful truth.
Could I have seen the future long before——
She's come! and Menelaüs sleeps no more.
I will avoid her: no, we will not meet;
I'm off on business.
(*Snatching up his hat and umbrella.*)
Helen. Where?
Mene. Oh! say to Crete.

DUET.

("There is Somebody coming up the Stairs."[1])

Mene. That somebody coming up, my dear,
Won't catch Menelaüs stopping here.
My hat I've got,
So I will trot.
Adieu, or *Au revoir.*

Helen. My mother is coming up; I hear
Her voice so peculiarly clear.
If you'll not stop,
At least you'll drop
A line from your new shore.

Mene. If you will telegraph to me
Across the briny, meaning sea,
Your words I'll read,
I shall indeed.
Send twenty—don't forget.

Helen. How can I telegraph to you?
It is a thing I cannot do.
The telegraph,
Though you may laugh,
Is not invented yet.

[1] This air is from the Opera-Burlesque "Windsor Castle," of which the entire music, composed by Frank Musgrave, can be obtained of Messrs. Metzler and Co., Great Marlborough Street.

Læda and Tyn. (*without*).
Menela-
Menela-
-*us*, we're at the door;
Menela-
Menela-
us, we are a waitin'.
Ringing we,
Singing we
Have some minutes *bin.*
Now the door is open,
We are coming in.

QUINTETTE.

(LÆDA *and* TYNDARUS *without.* HELEN, MENELAÜS, *and* PAGE, *who enters* L.H.)

Menela-
Menela-
-us, they're / we're } at the door,
&c., &c., &c.

[*At the end of the Quintette, exit* MENELAÜS L.H. HO PAIS, *the Page, strikes an attitude;* HELEN *dissembles in a general way through the music, and enter,* TO *the music,* MADAME LÆDA *and the ex-king, her husband.*

Læda (*recitative*).
Ah, my dear child! my own! my fond! my sweet!
(*Chord.*)
To see you once again (*Chord*) is quite a treat.'
(*Chord.*)

Tyn. (*mildly, in recitative*).
My dearest relative—— (*Chord.*)
Læda (*interrupting him*). I do believe, oh! (*Chord.*)
'Tis out of spite (*Chord.*)
That you interrupt (*Chord.*)
'My recitative. Oh!
(*Two final Chords.*)

Page (*as Chorus*). 'Tis now my turn——
(*Imitates a chord for himself.*)
Læda (*severely, in recitative*). What says the singing lout?
Page. I'm Chorus; 'tis my turn.
Læda. Is it? Turn out.

(TYNDARUS *dismisses him summarily. Exit* PAGE *as majestically as possible under the circumstances.*)

Helen. Oh, ma', I am so glad to see you here;
You've had a work to find us out, I fear.
Læda. Well, rather; but the other morning I
Said to my Tyndarus, "Now, I'll be sly."
Tyn. Yes, I said——
Læda. Now, pray do not interrupt.
Yes, dear, I said to him when we had supped,
Says I, "My Tynny, we want change of scene."
Says he, "That's what I have been thinking, queen."
"*You thin*-king! no, you're *fat* king, dear." Whereat
We laughed at my good joke.
Tyn. No, *I* made that.
Læda (*to him, silencing him. He apologizes and succumbs*).
Will you allow me just to say one word?
Can none but you at any time be heard?
Says I, "We want a change of scene—the pair;
Fresh *air*, too." "Yes," says Tynny, "right you *air*."
"Where can we go to, healthy, bright, and sunny?
We can't afford, this year, to spend much money."
And so I said to him, "Well, why not, Tyndarus,
Pay the dear chicks a visit? what's to hinder us?"
Tyn. (*in feeble corroboration*). Yes, what's to hinder——
Læda (*mildly severe to him*). Will you hold your tongue?
It does require enormous strength of lung

To get a word in when you're present.
(*Turning again to* HELEN.) Well,
Dear! let me see, what had I got to tell?
Oh, yes, I know; I said to him that they—
Mene, and you—will be some time away;
And if our road to them we do not find,
And visit them, they'll think it so unkind;
And you and I—that's Tynny and myself—
Don't care for plate; no, we can eat off delf,
And *do* love rustic fare, and no pretence.
Besides, said I, what matters the expense?
What is enough for two's enough for three,
And what suits you and Mene just suits me.
When I say me, Tynny will make no fuss;
So what's enough for three's enough for us,
For Tynny don't eat much——

Tyn. (*wishing to say something on this subject*).
My dear——

Læda (*smilingly deprecating his interruption*). Ah! fie!
Soup, fish, a joint at dinner, and some pie,
Beyond such humble fare I want no more;
Done when you like, but give me half-past four,
For it allows you, if that time you fix,
To lunch at one, and tea at half-past six;
Then stroll we through the garden, if it's fine,
And drop in for our supper, say at nine;
Then in good time, before your weary form
Reposes, take——

Tyn. A glass of something warm.
(*Catches his wife's eye, and catches it.*)

Læda. Tynny, you talk a deal too much; I'm shocked.
You don't get that at home.

Tyn. The cupboard's locked.

Læda. There, don't expose yourself; it's well for me
I keep the spirits under lock and key.
(*Speaks aside to* HELEN.)

Tyn. (*aside, chuckling, and showing a private key*).
But in the cellar, when she is asleep,
I call the spirits from the vasty deep.
Læda. What do you say? (*Tyndarus dissembles.*)
Your husband gone away?
Of course, when I was coming.
Helen. Yes, to-day.
Læda. Oh, *yesterday.* But why goes he to Crete?
(*To her husband.*)
Tynny, just order something I can eat.
Tyn. My dear, I fly. (*Walks slowly.*)
Læda. A something pray command which
Doesn't take many minutes.
Tyn. Ale and sandwich.
[*Exit* TYNDARUS L.H.
Læda (*sits*). Why does he go away, my precious sweet?
Helen. Well, I don't know; but he *has* gone—to Crete.
Læda. I do not wish to raise a single doubt of him;
But if you haven't got the reason out of him,
Depend upon it that it's something wrong—
A secret that he's hidden from you long.
I don't say certainly, for I don't know;
I but suggest that p'raps it may be so.
He seizes some excuse.
Helen (*aside*). He did.
Læda. A slight one.
Whatever 'tis, be sure that's not the right one.
Bless you! I know the men and all their doings—
Their little tricks, their falsehoods, and their wooings.
I haven't lived for nought: my teaching shows it;
Well, may I say, *Experientia docet.*
'Twas ever so; men think a girl a plaything.
When I was young, and very fond of bathing,
I used to take out bits of bread to chuck
To the white swans, and once I met a duck.

But never mind—I'm going on too fast.
Bygones are bygones, and those days are past.
But, Menelaüs, I can't but repeat,
Hasn't for nothing gone away to Crete.
My pet, 'tis not the proper way to treat her,
To go away to Crete to see a *Cretur*.

Helen. Can it be true?

Læda. Well, my advice I'll give
With pleasure——

Helen. Stop! Oh, ma'! how *shall* we live
While he's away?

Læda. *How* live, dear? We sha'n't hurt
With, daily, say three courses and dessert.

Helen. Dessert, indeed! *he's* gone, and he has taken

Læda. The cookery book!

Helen (*at desk*). The cheque-book! oh, forsaken!

(*Both fall, half fainting, into chairs.*)

Læda. Now, who'd ha' thought a man of his repute
Could have been so inhuman? Ugh! the brute!

Helen. You've money, ma.'

Læda. What, I! a poor ex-queen.
I've naught but Tyn——

Helen (*eagerly*). Ha!

Læda. *Tyndarus*, I mean.

Helen. And then, I know, despite my husband's rank,
I've got no credit at the Spartan bank.

Læda. Conduct like this appears to me most strange.
Taken the purse!

Helen (*poutingly*). He went away for change.

Læda. To pay the monster out my hands are itching.
(*Tragically*). Hast not *one* copper? [1]

[1] This inquiry should be as tragically made as was the celebrated question put, in her most awful tone, by Mrs. Siddons to a smirking haberdasher. The great actress, applying her finger and thumb to the stuff she was purchasing, raised her eyes slowly, fixed the man with a look, and said,

"How say ye, man, will this material wash?"

What became of the counter-jumper is not known.

Helen (*suddenly*). Yes, ma'; in the kitchen. (LÆDA *is delighted.*) (LÆDA *is melancholy again.*)

Læda. This is a most perplexing situation.

Helen (*meditating*). And Menelaüs false!

Læda. An inspiration!

(*Rushes to writing-table, takes a large piece of paper, and commences writing.*)

Helen. From many a prince I Menelaüs chose.
Was it because he had a better nose?
Or finer eyes? or was he taller? richer?
Or was he such a fascinating creechur?
Was it because, of all, I liked him best?
No, it was only just to spite the rest.
He is not handsome; ordinary simply.

Læda (*at table.*)
When I last saw him he was bloated, pimply.

Helen. You hate him——

Læda. With a rod I would his *back* tickle.
But my advice to you, my child, is practical.
We, while he's gone, must money have; don't fret.
We may, the poet says, be happy yet.

SONG.—*Læda.*

("We may be happy yet.")

Oh, smile as thou wert wont to smile
Before that weight of care.
The words I can't remember, while
I can't forget the air.
Some trinkets, dearest, you may sell,
And thus a trifle ge-e-e-e-et,
But let us make this a hotel,
And lodgings we will let.
We will let lodgings.
This card says lodgings
Here to let!

(*Displays card she has just written.*)

Helen. This happy thought my fancy's caught,
And has the question met.

I own that I
Do *not* see why
We shouldn't lodgings let.
This impulse 'twere not best to quell,
Or purpose to forget:
But this shall be a grand hotel,
And we'll be happy yet.

Both. We shall be happy!
We shall be ha-a-a-ppy-appy
YET!

("Great Eastern Polka.")

Both. Ring the bell for Tyndy, (HELEN *rings.*)
Stick it in the windy.
Menelaüs is away,
And there won't be a shindy.

(*Enter* TYNDARUS.)

Tyn. Voice like Marska's *in de*
Opera of Lindy
Chamounix,
Is calling me.
Pray, tell me what to do.

Læda. Only got to fasten
This a pane of glass on,
Any one will see it,
And it will not let him pass on.

Helen. Gum it, 'twill be safer
Than a common wafer.
This is my advice, pa',
As to what you'd better do.

TRIO.

Ring the bell for Tyndy,
Stick it in the windy.
Menelaüs is away,
And there won't be a shindy.
Gum it, 'twill be safer
Than a comon wafer.

This is {my / her / your} advice {pa' / ma'}
As to what {I'd / you'd / he'd} better do.

[*Exeunt* LÆDA *and* HELEN, R.H., *to a lively polka measure.* TYNDARUS *sees them to the door on the light fantastic tip-toe, and then remains solus.*

Tyn. To stick it up with gum won't take me long:
As lodging-keeper, I will *gum* it strong.
(*Goes to window and fastens bill up.*)
'Tis very odd!—my wife 's a little heady..
Can she have—ha! a fish is caught already.
(*Looking out of window.*)
I wonder what is the amount of tin
They're going to ask?
That's it, sir? step within.
No doubt about it: they will take him in.

(*Enter* HO PAIS R., *and* NURSE L., *without perambulator*).

Nurse. Woe! Woe!
We are foretelling
Woe to this dwelling.
Page. Woe! Woe!
What shall I say?
Strangers to-day
Coming this way!

Nurse. I in my tea——
Page. What did you see?
Nurse. A stranger.
Page (*pointing to* TYNDARUS, *who comes forward* C.). He?
Tyn. (*suspicious*). Me?
Oh, fiddle de dee.
Both. Fiddle de dee!
A minor key.

("Giles Scroggins.")

Nurse. There's something coming over me,
Tyn. Ri fol de riddle lol de lay.
Page. A something—a sort of a thingummee,
Tyn. Ri fol de riddle lol de lay.
As chorus you must not predict
Sorrows which *may* be ultimately fict—
—itious, or you will be kicked.
Ri fol de riddle lol de lay.
(*Repeat last three lines and chorus.*)

Trio. As chorus {you / we} must not predict
Sorrows which *may* ultimately fict—
—itious, or {we / you} shall be kicked.
Ri fol de riddle lol de lay.

[*Exit* PAGE L., NURSE R.
(TYNDARUS *retires up to window.*)
(*Enter* PARIS L.H., *preceded by* LÆDA.)

Læda. This way, sir, if you please.
Paris. A pleasant *look*-out.
You haven't got a guide—I mean a book out?
Læda. No, not at present; for the place I own
Is, I am glad to say, sir, scarcely known.
Here you may health and recreation seek,
All for a trifle—five pun' ten a-week.
Paris (*affectedly*). Ah, very moderate; and that of carse

Includes the usual everything?

Læda. Yes.

Paris (*drawlingly*). Ya-as.

Læda. When I say yes, I mean plate, linen too;
And service ain't included.

Paris (*looking curiously at* TYNDARUS, *and examining him through his eye-glass*). Who are you?
Another lodger my own plans ne'er suits.
(*Taking up his hat, as if going.*)

Læda. Another lodger? oh no, he's the Boots.

Tyn. (*surprised*). I say——

Læda. Be quiet, sir.

Paris. What does he dare—
Of Boots like this I trust there's not a pair.

Læda. He's our old servant, and he is permitted
To talk a bit.

Paris. Poor cweature! ha! half-witted.
What is your name?

Tyn. (*angrily*). My name I'd have you know,
Is——

Læda (*looking at him fiercely: he succumbs and apologizes*).
Hold your tongue, sir. Oh! *his* name 's Joe.

SONG.—*Paris.*

Air.—"Some one in de House wid Dinah."

Paris. At five o'clock I'll be a diner,
The bill of fare you'll please to show;
You'll give my leather boots a shiner,
And take 'em to my room, old Joe.

Tyn. I swear——

Paris. What, old Joe?

Tyn. Yes, old Joe.

Trio. Old Joe a kicking up ahind and afore,
And a lodging-keeper kicking up ahind old Joe.
[*Exeunt* TYNDARUS *and* LÆDA *dancing.*

Paris. Now, if my dream is true, 'tis here I'll see
The lovely form that's ever haunting me.
Oh, Venus, fairest goddess, in whose favour
I gave the judgment, always thought so clayver,
Whom Juno, and Minerva with her fan,
Envy as only envious women can,
You promised that the loveliest of her sex
Should at some time be mine. Do not perplex
Your votary; but, madame, if you make
A promise, keep it for your credit's sake.
Where is this rarity? Tell me where may *she* be?
(*Enter* L.H., HELEN, *with dustpan and broom.*)
Is this a mortal or the beauteous Hebe?

Helen. You stare as if at an ourang-outang, sir!

Paris. She speaks!

Helen. I am the chambermaid. You rang, sir?

Paris. Speak on, bright angel, I am in a trance;
Wake me—please pinch me.

Helen. Just give me the chance.
There (*pinches him; he seizes her hand*).
Let me go.

Paris. I'll cover it with kisses.

Helen. Oh, don't, sir, please; oh no, sir, here comes Missis,
She'll see you.

Paris. What's her name?

Helen. Her name, sir? Harris.

Paris. Is it? And I—you've heard of me—
I'm Paris.

Helen. Indeed, I have heard everybody say
That Paris is at all times rather gay.

Paris. But without you I'm wretched, dull—a mope.
Say you'll be mine; at least, dear, let me hope.

Helen. Oh, hope by all means. Had we met before,
We might—(*aside*)—The nicest man I ever saw;
And Menelaüs false to me.

Paris. What is it ?
To see you, dearest, I have planned this visit.
Venus herself commands you, dear, to jump any
Gulfs that may be between us, and accompany
Myself to Troy : so come, and do not wince.
Helen (*aside*). His eyes are lustrous : Menelaüs squints.
Paris. I'll give you dresses when you may a frock need.
Helen (*aside*). Straight legs ; and Menelaüs is so knock-knee'd.
Paris. Come, and your words shall be to Paris law.
Helen (*aside*). Small hands ; while Menelaüs has a paw.
Paris. What say you ?
Helen. If the question you must press,
I own than "No," I'd rather answer "Yes."
But as I do not see my way quite clearly,
And as I might pay for a folly dearly,
I'll take my time, and think the matter o'er.
Paris. *O'er !* in a pair *oar*—there's one on the shore.
With me you will in safety take a row.
Helen. I like the water, and I sha'n't say "No."

SONG.

Air.—"Judy Callaghan."

Helen. P'raps we may be out
Till two o'clock in the morning ;
Then I do not doubt
But I shall get my "warning."
Paris. But the ring I'll get,
Settle all my property,
For my heart is set
On going in headlong flopperty.
Don't say nay ; kiss me with a smack again.
O'er the *say* sail, and not come back again.

DUET.

Can't / Don't } say nay ; kiss { him / me } with, &c.

[*They execute an Irish jig, if they know it, or a dance as much resembling an Irish jig as possible if they don't know it, and exeunt dancing* R.H.

(*Enter* MENELAÜS, *cautiously*, L.H.)

Mene. Well, all seems quiet. So they've gone at length.

(*Enter* TYNDARUS, *puffing*, R.H.)

Tyn. I couldn't take your trunk—I'd not the strength.
Hullo! it isn't you! My! Menelaüs!

(*Quick-step. Chord. Attitude.*)

Mene. What, Tyndarus!

Tyn. (*aside*). When he knows all, he'll flay us.

Mene. (*aside*). So they're not gone. (*Aloud to him.*)
Don't say you've seen me, mind.

Tyn. Oh, when I like, you know I can be blind,
And keep a secret.

Mene. Good! at once I'll go.

(*Going up* C., *sees card in window.*)
What's this placard?

Tyn. (*foolishly*). That card. Oh, I don't know.

Mene. "Lodgings to let!" (*Takes it down.*)
Who did it? I *will* know.

(*Rings violently. Enter* NURSE R., *and* PAGE L.)

Nurse and Page. Woe!

Mene. (*furiously*). Stop!——

Chorus. She wouldn't stop, though we said woe.

Mene. Who wouldn't stop? What is it makes you mourn?

(*Enter* LÆDA L.H., *distractedly.*)

Læda (*not seeing* MENELAÜS).
I'm taken in and done! The lodger's gone.

Mene. (*sternly*). No, he's come back.

(LÆDA *screams, and falls on* PAGE.)
What is the meaning of it?

Tyn. She thought—that is, *they* thought to make a profit.

Mene. Profits, like poets, are not made ; they're born.
Læda (*rising*). Borne off! Alas! she, too! the lodger's gone!
A languid fop! a most deceitful lodger!
A weak, affected, wicked, artful dodger.
Who, not a simple sixpence has he paid
For anything——
Tyn. But then he hasn't stayed.
Læda (*to Tyn.*). 'Tis all your fault.
Tyn. Mine!
Læda. You would be so clever!
Mene. And Helen? Speak!
Chorus. She——
Mene. Yes.
Chorus. Has gone for ever.

(MENELAÜS C., LÆDA R., *and* TYNDARUS L., *faint in three chairs.*)

Chorus. The name is Paris,
And he is the boy,
The son of Priam,
Who to Troy——

Mene. To Troy?
Chorus. Sails in a boat.
Mene. A boat ; we will pursue.
You'll come ((*to Tyn.*).
Tyn. No thank you, *chacun à son goût.*
Læda. I cannot go. A blessing on your breeze!
The motion with me always disagrees.
Tyn. And I would rather be on land than sea:
The boat unpleasantly affecteth me.
Mene. Then I alone ; and in two hours or more
I'll call the princes to the Trojan war.
Farewell! farewell! in vain my grief I smother.
You are the cause of all this anguish, mother,
As was the mother so the daughter! Ah!

Læda (*to* TYNDARUS).
Will you let me be thus abused, papa?
Tyn. I don't know what to say——
Chorus. For every one
We'll speak (*Bell rings*). But hark; my friends, the play is done.

FINALE.

("Guillaume Tell" *overture.*)

Mene. Quick o'er the ocean let me sail,
Not even stop for a glass of ale;
Hunger and grief may make me pale,
And the conduct of Helen, that false fe-male.
Tyn. Yes, o'er the wave, the Adri-atic,
White Sea, Black Sea, he will go,
Læda. Though cold or heat, till pain rheumatic
Tyn. Shall up Menelaüs sew.
So-oh-oh-oh!
Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!
All. Quick o'er the ocean let {me / him} sail,
&c., &c.

(*Grand finale. The scene at the back divides, discovering* PARIS *and* HELEN *sailing away in a small vessel.* CHORUS *hold up their hands to the skies.* MENELAÜS, *to whom* NURSE *has handed* BABY, *is rushing towards them; but, remembering that they are miles away, poses himself in the most becoming attitude for the tableau;* LÆDA *faints for the third time during the piece.*

Tableau.

OF ... ATIC

"TO BE LET, FURNISHED."

A DRAWING-ROOM COMEDY IN THREE ACTS; OR MAY BE ACTED AS A CHARADE TO THE WORD "BILLET."

Dramatis Personæ.

MAURICE MONEYPENNY (artist).
HAROLD DUTTON (his friend).
LORD MONKHAVEN (a patron of art).
MR. SIMON SKIPPER (house agent and auctioneer).
JOSEPH (his clerk and office boy).
GLADYS VANSITTART (an American heiress).
MISS PENELOPE FREEBODY, M.D. (her aunt).
ELIZA (a servant).

Costumes.—Maurice Moneypenny should have a loose velveteen coat. Miss Freebody (if possible), a divided skirt, a *pince-nez*, a small tight-fitting felt hat, and an umbrella in her hand. Gladys Vansittart, a cream-coloured costume, with a large cream feather in her hat. The others, ordinary morning dress.

ACT I.

Studio in MAURICE MONEYPENNY'S *house at Richmond. Paintings scattered about, an easel with a covering over it in one corner. On the table a heap of letters and papers.*

M. M. (*arranging a painting against the wall*). It is not any use; put it in what light I will, its fate will be always the same. I believe I am the unluckiest dog in

the whole universe. (*Throws himself back in an arm-chair.*) Heigho! an artist's life is not sugar and sweets; at least mine is not, it is as sour as vinegar and crab-apples combined. Do what I will, I can never get on. (*Sighs.*)

(*Enter* HAROLD DUTTON, *throws his hat on a chair, and yawns.*)

H. D. Well, old fellow, how goes the world with you?

M. M. Couldn't be worse!

H. D. Don't get into a fit of the blues, for goodness' sake. Look on the bright side of things; I always do.

M. M. Look on the bright side of things! My dear fellow, that's impossible; where is it? There is no bright side for me to look on. Every side is as black as pitch.

H. D. Well, you sometimes get a good word from the critics.

M. M. Yes, but good words won't pay the butcher's bill. I sent two landscapes to the Academy this year, they were skied, hung as high as Haman, and after three months of suspense they were returned on my hands. No one made even a bid for them!

H. D. But you sold a sketch to Lord Monkhaven, didn't you?

M. M. A mere trifle, only a miserable five pounds' worth (*standing up, and surveying some of the pictures on the walls*). Look at my masterpieces—a rural landscape that would make any one's eyes water—a charming study of a beggar-girl—an exquisite little river scene, which might have come from the brush of Constable; and yet such is the obstinate stupidity, the dull crass ignorance of the British public, that these matchless works of art still remain unsold.

H. D. Well, give up painting as a bad business, and try something else.

M. M. Just what I did six months ago; I tried literature, and with what result? I wrote a three-volume novel, my friends declared it would make my fortune, but——

H. D. But what?

M. M. (*plaintively*). It didn't! nobody bought it. It fell as flat as a pancake. Though there was a harrowing murder in it, fit to curdle any reasonable person's blood with horror, and just what people generally enjoy, they refused to appreciate it. There was humour in it enough to start a comic paper, pathos enough to put a whole girls' school in tears, and yet, will you believe it? the reading public refused to laugh at my jokes or weep at my sentiment. It is disgusting, but, unfortunately, it is too true.

H. D. Well, you have a charming pretty house here in a delightful neighbourhood. Why don't you let it, furnished, and make money of it?

M. M. (*groaning*). Ah! that's another speculation which has almost spelt ruin to my unfortunate self. Having a legacy of furniture left to me by an affectionate grandmother, I took this expensive house. I was informed by all my friends, and by those sharks, the agents, that furnished houses near London let for fabulous sums. Do you think I have found it so, Harold?

H. D. No, but you may yet.

M. M. (*with animation*). *Never!* Look at the windows, they are placarded with bills. I have advertized this incubus of a house in all the daily and many of the weekly papers, but the result is always the same—it is still to be let!

H. D. You may get rid of it some day.

M. M. No, I tell you, *no!* There it hangs round my neck like a log, like the old man of the sea in the Arabian Nights, impossible to be got rid of. I leave no stone unturned, but my efforts are in vain. Rent, taxes, gas, and

all in arrears; and last month I signed a bill of sale, so that everything, except the pictures, is liable to be seized. Under such circumstances, what is to be done, except to turn street-singer, or to hire a barrel-organ and a performing monkey?

H. D. Have you ever thought of marriage as a means of solving your difficulties? There is always the "Matrimonial News" to fall back upon. It is often a friend in need, and clears the way to desirable heiresses of a certain age.

M. M. That resource is closed to me, for, alas! to add to my misfortunes, I have fallen in love.

H. D. No!! You don't mean it. (*Aside*). He is quite capable of any folly. People like him generally do fall in love at the wrong time.

M. M. Yes! it is a fact. I have fallen deeply, wildly, distractedly, hopelessly in love with a beauteous, celestial being——

Eliza (*opening the door and putting in her head*). If you please, sir, the milkman has called for his little account—one pound thirteen shillings and fourpence halfpenny.

M. M. Yes! yes! I daresay he has called. Milkmen are particularly fond of calling. Tell him, Eliza, to call again to-morrow. He seems so partial to the amusement, that it would be quite unkind to deprive him of it.

Eliza (*fumbling with a corner of her apron*). He says, sir, as 'ow he wants the money very bad, for he has a large bill to make up to-morrow.

M. M. (*aside*). So have I, a great many large bills. (*Aloud.*) Well, Eliza, what are you waiting for? That's enough!

Eliza. Please, sir, I was forgetting to say that a gentleman left this 'ere paper about the local taxes, and he says to-morrow is the last day for paying up.

M. M. (*waving his hand*). I know. I know. That will do, leave the paper. You may go, Eliza.

Eliza (*rushing to the window*). Lor', sir! there's a carriage stopping at the door; oh, my gracious, isn't it a stunner?

M. M. (*looking out*). It is Lord Monkhaven's carriage, and there he is himself. How strange he should come just now!

H. D. Now, Maurice, you'll have a stroke of luck! I told you it would come some day, and here it is!

M. M. I don't expect it.

Eliza. I must run and get a clean cap and apron to open the door. [*Exit.*

(LORD MONKHAVEN *shuffles in, leaning on a stick, one foot swathed in flannel.*)

Lord M. How do, Mr. Moneypenny? I came to see what you have to show me to-day.

M. M. (*advancing*). With pleasure, my lord. I have some pretty little views on the Clyde, that I should like you to see.

Lord M. (*gruffly*). Oh! bother the Clyde. I hate landscapes. Give me good honest flesh and blood—the human face divine. Did you get the letter I sent you from Mr. Spyall, the great art critic?

M. M. Oh, yes, I did. You enclosed it to me when I was in Scotland.

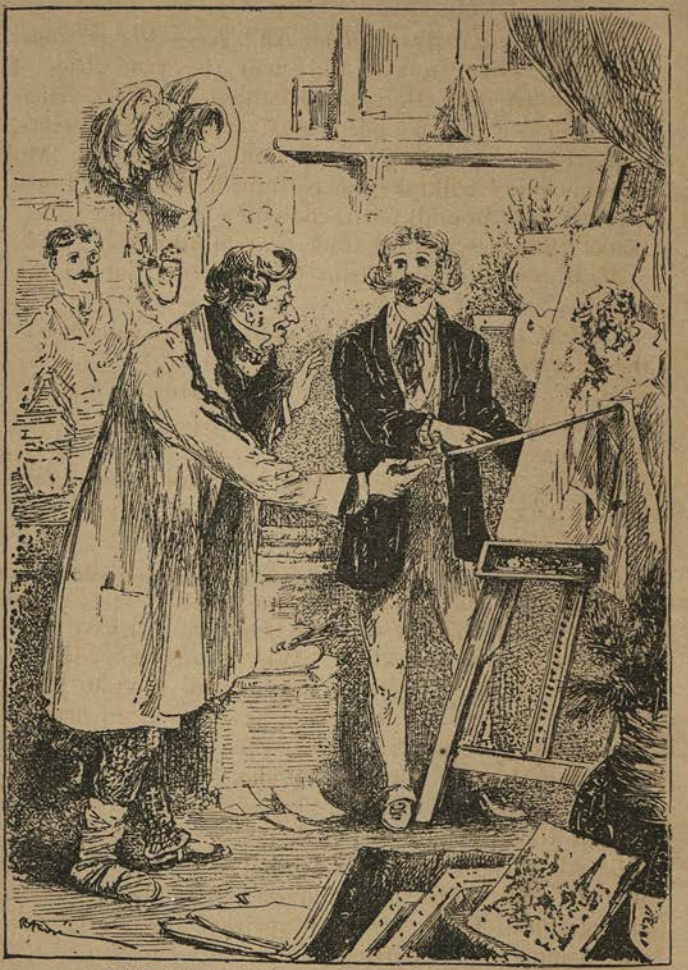
Lord M. He advised you to give up landscapes, and keep to figures, you ought to take his advice—(*shuffles over to the easel*). What have you got here?

M. M. (*hurriedly*). Oh! nothing—merely an unfinished study—nothing more. It's not fit to be looked at.

Lord M. (*trying to lift the covering with his stick*). But I want to see it.

H. D. (*in a low voice*). Go over, Maurice, and assist his lordship.

M. M. (*anxiously*). It is not for sale. I did not intend any one to see it.



LORD MONKHAVEN AND MAURICE MONEYPENNY.

Lord M. But I insist on seeing it. (*Lifts his stick again, the covering falls off, and the portrait of a lady is disclosed.*)

Lord M. (*enthusiastically*). Ah! yes—this is something like! an exquisite face—hair the true shade of ruddy brown that Giorgione delighted in; eyes, violets dipped in dew (as the poets say); expression, piquante, coquettish, enchanting; neck, like a swan's! Mr. Moneypenny, I will take this portrait, it is mine. I will give you forty pounds for it, and will add it to my collection of "Beauties," in the Gallery at Monkhaven House.

M. M. (*hesitating*). Thank you, my lord, but it is not for sale.

Lord M. (*impatiently*). I thought *all* the paintings in the room were for sale.

M. M. All the others are—all except this. This is the only exception. If you look round, perhaps you will see something——

Lord M. (*interrupting*). This is the only one I care for. Is it a commission?

M. M. (*hesitating*). No.

Lord M. Then why do you refuse to part with it?

M. M. I—I cannot give my reasons.

Lord M. (*looking closer at the portrait*). I have seen this face before somewhere. Where was it? Ah! I remember now. Yesterday, driving in Rotten Row, some one pointed out to me the new American heiress. Miss—Miss Gladys Vansittart. She is, I am sure, the original of this portrait. Isn't it she, Mr. Moneypenny?

M. M. Ye—es, but I didn't know she was an heiress.

Lord M. She is indeed, half a silver mine belongs to her. All the young sparks about town will be running after her soon. The shop-windows will be filled with her photographs. Come, Mr. Moneypenny, I will give you sixty pounds for the portrait; do you agree to that?

M. M. (*shaking his head*). I am sorry, my lord, but I cannot take it—this painting is not for sale. Any other you can have, but not this.

Lord M. I have told you before that I do not wish

for anything else—(*going to the door*). You won't take ninety pounds for it, will you?

M. M. No!—nor a hundred! I will never sell it. I painted it for my own gratification, and I cannot part with it.

Lord M. Dear me! I did not know you had such lofty ideas. One would think you were a second Millais. I was not aware that you were rich enough to paint for your own gratification. Good-day, Mr. Moneypenny, and if you change your mind at any time, be sure and let me know (*shuffles towards the door*).

H. D. (*watching him go, and then turning towards Maurice Moneypenny*). Maurice, of all the idiots, the dolts, the double-distilled donkeys I ever could have imagined, you are the greatest. Why on earth didn't you take Lord Monhaven's handsome offer?

M. M. (*excitedly*). Don't speak to me, Harold. Only think, *she* is here—here in London!

H. D. Whom in the name of wonder, do you mean?

M. M. Gladys—the original of that portrait (*standing opposite to it*). Part with it, *never!* I would as soon part with my own soul.

H. D. Oh! I see—You *are* in love, then, in the most ridiculous stage of the disease. You were just telling me all about it, when we were disturbed. So Gladys is the name of your enchantress, is it? Skip the raptures, and come to the facts.

M. M. (*dreamily*). I met her at a Hydropathic establishment at Rothesay. It was a case of love at first sight. The first evening we met, our eyes conveyed sweet silent messages to one another across the tea-table——

H. D. And stopped there!

M. M. (*with animation*). No, by Jove, they did not! What do you think, Harold? Gladys Vansittart is under the impression that *I* am Lord Monkhaven.

H. D. *You!* Impossible.

M. M. It came about in this way. You heard him say that he enclosed me a letter. The inner envelope was addressed to him, and as I was leaving the room, the morning after I arrived at Rothesay, I happened to drop it. What was my surprise when I saw the fair Gladys hurrying after me, and heard her voice saying in a slight American accent, "I guess you are Lord Monkhaven. You dropped this envelope."

H. D. And did you not undeceive her?

M. M. Well, I was going to, but then I thought I would take a rise out of her, so I let her have it her own way. It seemed such a capital joke for me to be mistaken for a gouty, self-indulgent old peer, and I imagined she would find me out at once. But the Americans know nothing about the British peerage, and Gladys never doubted that I was a real live lord. I rose twenty per cent. in her estimation at once, she laid herself out to complete her conquest, she wore her prettiest frocks, she was arch, smiling, piquante, bewitching, tantalizing, everything by turns and nothing long.

H. D. And the result was that you were hopelessly entangled in the meshes of King Cupid.

M. M. Exactly. No man was ever more so. At the end of two days I found it utterly impossible to reveal to Gladys that I bore the ridiculous name of Moneypenny instead of the sonorous title of Monkhaven. The descent was too great, and my courage completely failed. I felt that I had won her love, and I feared to lose it. (*Sighs.*)

Eliza (*opening the door*). If you please, sir, the greengrocer is here.

M. M. (*starting up*). Oh, bother the greengrocer. Tell him to go to Jericho—or—or perhaps to Margate. The sea breezes would be of great use to his health.

Eliza. He says, sir, that he wants to have his little account settled.

M. M. I'll settle him. Ask him if he has change of a £20 note.

Eliza (*putting in her head*). No, sir, he says he hasn't.

M. M. Then what the deuce does he mean by coming here without change! Tell him I have no small change in the house, nothing but large notes. (*Aside.*) That's true, by Jove, I have a note-book of considerable size.

[*Exit* ELIZA.

H. D. Had your fair American a chaperon with her?

M. M. Oh, yes, a dragon of an aunt, Miss Penelope Freebody, M.D., who spoke through her nose, and was always boasting of her medical degree. She was most anxious to practise her skill on me, and inquired every day if I was suffering from rheumatism or sciatica, as if so, she could put me to rights at once with her magic drops, the Freebody Elixir. I disapproved of that woman, she was dogmatic, dictatorial, and generally disagreeable. I have always observed that charming nieces invariably have objectionable aunts.

H. D. And you were encouraged by both aunt and niece?

M. M. Oh! wasn't I? In their eyes, I was an English peer of the realm, a perfect phœnix to Americans. I was thrown with Gladys from morning till night, by the mountain side, by the river, on upland, glade, and glen. (*sighing*). It was then I took her portrait; can you wonder that I do not wish to part with it?

H. D. And you never revealed the state of your affections.

M. M. Never! I knew if I had, I should have been obliged to confess that instead of being Lord Monkhaven, with collieries and thousands at my back, I was only plain Maurice Moneypenny, a penniless artist entangled with debts. Moneypenny!—what a bitter irony it is for me to

have such a name—to be associated with the idea of money at all.

H. D. So you decamped from Rothesay?

M. M. Yes, after two days of unspeakable bliss I took the 8.20 train to Glasgow, and left the field altogether, like a culprit as I was. Oh! what misery one false step does entail.

H. D. And you never knew that your fair American was an heiress?

M. M. Never! What good does that do? It only puts her more above my reach. I shall only hear of her marriage a little sooner (*Goes to the easel, and removes the covering*). There she is—her very image. Look at it, Harold! What a peerless complexion—roses under water—lips parted as if newly stung by a bee—hair like imprisoned sunbeams! And to think of that face gracing the collection of beauties at Monkhaven House. Never! It is all that is left to me of the romance of my life, and I will keep it for ever. I would rather sell myself than sell it. (*Throws himself back in a chair before the portrait.*) Oh, Gladys! how those lovely pictured eyes of yours seem to mock me and my misfortunes. She has gone from my gaze like a beautiful dream! We have lived and loved, and, alas! I have loved and lost.

Eliza (*putting in her head*). If you please, sir, what will you have for dinner to-day?

M. M. (*aside.*) Recalled to the realities of life! (*Aloud*). Oh! anything. You had better bring up the cold mutton. (*Exit* ELIZA.) You may as well stay, Harold, and share what there is. By the way, I have composed some farewell lines to Gladys. I think they are rather good (*opening an envelope*). Would you like to hear them?

H. D. (*hurriedly*). No, no, thank you. Never mind. Another time will do. (*Aside*). Poetry, indeed! I think prose is more in his line just now. He is really getting quite too ridiculous!

(*Enter* ELIZA *with a tray, a bare bone of mutton on it, a jug of water and the heel of a loaf. Lays the table-cloth.*)

M. M. (*going over to the table, and inspecting the bone*). Eliza, how's this? Is that all that's left of the leg of mutton?

Eliza (*tossing her head*). Yes, sir, we've had it for three days. I don't know how much longer you'd have it to last!

M. M. Three days! have we? Then why didn't you send up to Steeds's, the butcher's, for a beefsteak?

Eliza. He says he won't give us any more credit, sir, 'cos as 'ow you owe him such a large bill already.

[*Exit, slamming the door behind her.*

M. M. What an objectionable person this Steeds is. I shall not continue to deal with him. Come, Harold, come to the table (*stands up and tries to carve*). How do you like your meat done? I think I can get you a small slice here. No! (*puts down the knife*), this bone is quite hopeless. It ought to have been devilled, or perhaps it has been devilled already.

H. D. Never mind. I have not very much appetite.

M. M. (*munching a dry crust*). Well, *I* have; but the fact is, my dear fellow, that my cupboard is as bare as Mother Hubbard's in the nursery song, and even a crust is acceptable to me.

H. D. Come out, and let us have a smoke and a stroll.

M. M. Impossible! In the first place, I have no tobacco, and in the second, I may encounter my creditors. Besides, a stroll on an empty stomach is not an exhilarating occupation (*pacing restlessly up and down the room*). I wonder which is the best way to commit suicide—by a pistol shot or a dose of laudanum, eh, Harold?

H. D. Nonsense. You must not take such ideas into your head.

M. M. I can't help it, it is they that take me. Here's Eliza again, a bill or a dun, no doubt. I can read it in the expression of her countenance.

Eliza (*standing at the door*). A gentleman of the name of Levi wishes to speak to you, sir. There's his card. (*Flings it on the table.*)

M. M. (*Takes it up, then sinks back in his chair and groans aloud*). The crisis has come! This is the inexorable Jew who holds the bill of sale. I am done for—utterly quashed. There really is nothing for me now, Harold, but the barrel-organ and the performing monkey—or—or else the Bankruptcy Court. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

MR. SKIPPER'S OFFICE.

Large printed placards pinned against the walls, and fastened to the windows. JOSEPH *seated on a high stool at a desk, with his pen behind his ear. Enter* MR. SKIPPER, *who hangs up his hat and overcoat on a peg, and deposits his umbrella in a corner.*

Mr. S. (*rubbing his hands*). Anything doing, Joseph? Any letters, postcards, or telegrams?

Joseph. No, sir, none.

Mr. S. Dear me! I thought those parties would have called, or written about 13, Albemarle Terrace. Very strange, very! But I'll keep 'em up to it, they sha'n't slip through my fingers like that; no, indeed. I'll tip 'em a rouser, that I will! (*Sits down and takes up a pen.*) By the way, Joseph! *Joseph!*—are you deaf?

Joseph (*turning round*). Yes, sir—no, sir, I mean.

Mr. S. Have you drawn up these advertisements?

Joseph. Yes, sir, here they are (*handing them*).

Mr. S. We must send them into the papers to-morrow. It's expensive work, advertising, very, but it pays in

the end, at least, it *ought* to pay, if trade improves. Just at present trade couldn't be much worse than it is. I can't imagine what the Government is about. How many furnished houses have we got on our books, Joseph?

Joseph. Two hundred and eighty-four, sir.

Mr. S. Dear me! dear me! and little or no demand for any of them. That's bad, very bad. (*Walks up and down the office.*) Pull down that placard a leetle more, Joseph, so that parties passing by may be caught by it. There's nothing like putting one's name prominently before the public, and Skipper is a good taking name that at once catches hold of the attention, and sticks in the memory like wax. When the public see it at railway stations, or in the interior of omnibuses, they naturally ask, "Who *is* Skipper?" They look farther and find that Skipper is a House and Land Agent, that he is the agent to the Albemarle Life and Fire Insurance Company, that he is a first-rate auctioneer and valuator, &c., &c. And so the name becomes a household word. Now, Joseph, don't be lazy, pull this placard a little to the right, now more to the front, that's it, *that's* it! (*stands back a little to watch the effect*). Yes, very good, I distinctly saw a well-dressed lady in a sealskin jacket stop on the opposite side of the street, and peruse the placard at her leisure. She was evidently impressed by it. I have no doubt she will call about something. Did you observe her, Joseph?

Joseph. No, sir. I think she was a minding her dog.

Mr. S. (*sharply*). She was doing nothing of the kind; attend to your writing, boy. That placard certainly does read well (*stands before it*). I drew it up myself, and it does me great credit (*reads very slowly and with much satisfaction*)—

Do you want your life insured? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want a valuation made? Go to SKIPPER!

Do you want an auction conducted? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want a farm? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want an unfurnished house? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want a furnished house? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want furnished or unfurnished apartments?
Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want to borrow money? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want a job-carriage? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want debts collected? Go to SKIPPER!
Do you want governesses, tutors, servants, caretakers, husbands, wives, children to adopt?
Go at once to SKIPPER.

He knows everything, hears of everything, can find everything, do everything, organize everything! He is the centre of all useful information, and the compendium of all necessary knowledge. NO ONE CAN DO WITHOUT HIM. Therefore without any delay,

"GO TO SKIPPER!!!"

Mr. S. (*complacently*). Yes, I must say, that is very neatly put. Another point of exclamation might perhaps make it a leetle more startling, but, on the whole, I am pleased with it, very! It ought to draw a good many fish into the net. Is that the office bell, Joseph? I thought I heard a ring.

Joseph (*looking out*). No, sir, it's only the milk.

Mr. S. *Very* strange there are so few people calling to-day. I can't make it out at all. Business ought to be getting a little brisk, now that the weather is improving. Have you got the key of Waterside, Mr. Moneypenny's little place, Joseph?

Joseph. No, sir. He didn't leave it. He said it was no use.

Mr. S. (*shaking his head*). Things are going badly with him, very badly. I expect he'll be sold up before long. I saw my friend and partner, Levi, going into Waterside just now. It is very unfortunate that Mr.

Moneypenny shouldn't be able to let his 'ouse. Any offers for it, Joseph?

Joseph. No, sir, not one.

Mr. S. Umph! A bad business! Somehow, 'igh art doesn't pay. If Mr. Moneypenny would only take to 'ouse decorating, it might be a different story with him, but advice is quite thrown away on 'igh flyers like him. Is that a ring, Joseph? I'm sure I heard a ring.

Joseph (*looking out*). No, sir, it's only the water-cart passing.

Mr. S. I thought it might be a telegram for me. I am expecting a good many telegrams this afternoon from gentlemen in the City, but certainly I never knew business so slack as it is at present. I must draw up another advertisement. There's nothing else for it, advertising is the soul of trade. (*Writes.*)

Joseph (*glancing up*). There's two ladies, sir, looking in at the window. They're stopping!—they're stopping!

Mr. S. (*eagerly*). Are they, indeed. That's very satisfactory. I like having to do with ladies, they are so easily taken in—ahem! I mean so easily dealt with. Joseph, be composed, look as if you were busy, go on writing like one o'clock.

(MISS PENELOPE FREEBODY *and her niece are seen standing in the doorway.*)

Mr. S. (*aside*). I hope they won't pass the door. Their eyes must be caught by that telling placard just in front. Shall I address them? Shall I speak to them? No, I won't. Yes, I will. Things are growing desperate, and it is worth a venture. I *will!* (*Coming forward, and making a low bow.*) Can I do anything for you today, ladies? I have a splendid assortment of furnished and unfurnished residences on my books, and as there is likely to be an enormous demand for them, I advise you to apply instantly.

Miss P. F. (*in a strong American accent*). I was

thinking of looking at a furnished house that's well located, where there's a good opening for a professional woman, who has taken a medical degree, and is ready to practise her profession right away.

Mr. S. (*with animation*). Come in, ladies, come in at once. Oblige me by taking seats (*places chairs*). I will give you a list of most eligible furnished residences, exactly the thing you require. Joseph, write out a list for these ladies. About what rent would you go to, madam? (*addressing* MISS FREEBODY, *who sits rigidly in her chair, with her umbrella between her knees*).

Miss P. F. Well, I reckon we would give about a hundred dollars a week.

Mr. S. Dollars?

Miss P. F. We're so used to dollars in the States. We only came to Europe about three months back.

Mr. S. (*rubbing his hands*). Ah! you'll be delighted with Richmond, ladies, there's nothing like it—fine climate, convenient shops, delicious air, excellent train service, healthy neighbourhood——

Miss P. F. *Healthy*, did you say?

Mr. S. (*ecstatically*). Most salubrious!

Miss P. F. (*rising*). Then I'm afraid it wouldn't suit. Come, Gladys, we had better go. I don't want a healthy neighbourhood at all. I want to find a place where there is a lot of chronic rheumatism and sciatica flying about. My elixir is a sovereign remedy for all complaints of the kind, and I wish to make a few startling cures to begin with.

Mr. S. Pray sit down, ladies. I remember now that I have heard of several severe cases of rheumatism in Richmond lately, imported, no doubt, and I expect there will be others coming in shortly. As to the society of Richmond, you will find it delightful; artistic and intellectual to the highest degree; charming re-unions at the Assembly Rooms every month during the winter; lectures

and discussions on all subjects, scientific and literary. In fact, ladies, you will be treated here to the feast of reason and the flow of soul.

G. V. (*abruptly*). I wonder if—if Lord Monkhaven lives about here?

Mr. S. Lord Monkhaven! Do you mean the old gentleman, miss?

G. V. (*hurriedly*). Oh, no, quite a young man.

Mr. S. I understood that his lordship was somewhat advanced in years, but I may be mistaken; so many distinguished strangers take up their residences in the neighbourhood, that I may confuse him with some other nobleman. I will certainly have inquiries made as to whether his lordship is residing here at present. Joseph, make a note of that.

G. V. Oh! please don't say it was I that was asking about him.

Mr. S. (*with dignity*). Not for worlds! As a professional man, I should be quite incapable of such a breach of confidence.

G. V. I only asked from curiosity.

Mr. S. Quite so. I understand perfectly.

Miss P. F. Well, I guess I should like to know more about these furnished houses you were talking of. Where are they located?

Mr. S. (*promptly*). I was just going to tell you, ladies, of a charming little bijou residence near at hand. It belongs to a celebrated artist in this neighbourhood, who is anxious to travel for a year or so. Waterside is the name of the house, and I am convinced it would suit you to a T.

G. V. Is there a studio?

Mr. S. A capital one, excellent light, first-rate position.

G. V. I am glad of that, for I intend to devote myself to art; art is so fashionable. Lord Monkhaven was telling me that even Duchesses design nowadays; that even Princesses have become artists.

Mr. S. Certainly; so they have.

Miss P. F. (*abruptly*). The point is, Mr. ——, I forget your name——

Mr. S. (*promptly*). Skipper. Simon Skipper, at your service.

Miss P. F. The point is then, Mr. Skipper, would this bijou residence you speak of suit a professional person of my standing? Could a brass plate be put on the door? I always carry mine about with me (*produces it*). Observe, "Penelope Freebody, M.D." *That* ought to cause a sensation in a place like Richmond.

Mr. S. So it will; it certainly will.

Miss P. F. I reckon you have no lady doctors here?

Mr. S. Not one.

Miss P. F. (*triumphantly*). So much the better for me. I shall have the field all to myself. To spread my fame, I intend taking out a patent for my new medicine, "Freebody's Magic Elixir" or "Freebody's Cureall," I am not sure yet which I will call it.

Mr. S. (*eagerly*). There I can assist you, madam. Taking out patents is quite in my line, and I only charge five per cent. commission for my trouble. I can give you every information on the subject.

Miss P. F. (*looking at him steadfastly*). I think I ought to try my cure on you. Yes, I plainly detect feverish symptoms about your eyes (*fumbling in her reticule*). I should certainly prescribe a teaspoonful of my elixir to be taken right away. You will then be able practically to test the wonderfully invigorating effects of the mixture. (*Produces a small bottle.*)

Mr. S. (*drawing back*). Thank you, madam, but there is no occasion for me to take your elixir. I assure you I am in perfect health.

Miss P. F. (*decidedly*). *Being* in health is one thing, *keeping* in health is another. This magic elixir of mine drives all poisonous vapours out of the system, and

arrests the progress of disease. I insist upon your trying it. You can then sign a testimonial admitting the benefit which you have derived from it, which I will have printed, and added to the other testimonials I have brought with me from the States. You have no idea of the virtues of the elixir, it will make a new man of you.

Mr. S. (*feebly*). I—I never felt better in my life.

Miss P. F. (*impatiently*). That is nothing to the purpose, sir. I tell you the premonitory symptoms of disease are extremely insidious, and only a skilled practitioner, such as I am, can detect them. Have you got a teaspoon here?

Mr. S. (*triumphantly*). No!

Miss P. F. (*taking one out of her reticule*). But *I* have! Now, Mr. Skipper, I am going to administer to you a dose of my marvellous, my priceless, my unparalleled elixir! (*pours it out*).

Mr. S. (*shrinking back*). I would really rather not take it, madam.

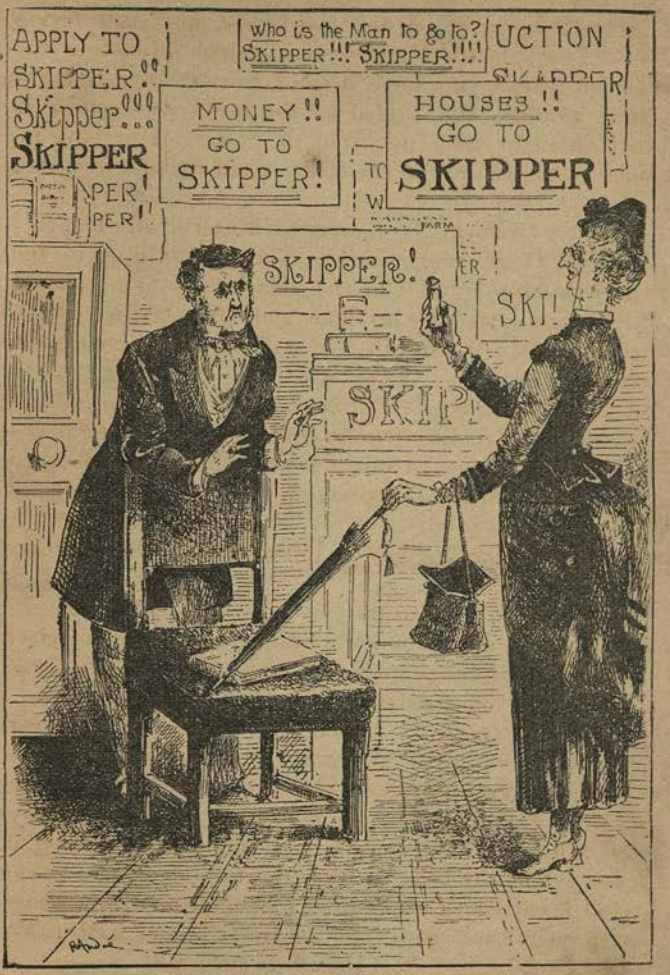
Miss P. F. (*looking at him in disgust*). *Not take it?* Not take the most wonderful health-giver in the universe? You must be crazy, man; I'll have nothing more to do with you. Come, Gladys, let us go right away.

Mr. S. (*eagerly*). Oh, pray don't go, ladies; I will take the elixir with pleasure. Anything to oblige a—lady, a—a doctor, I mean.

Miss P. F. (*handing the teaspoon*). There! Be careful of it, pray. Every drop is worth its weight in gold. You will hardly have swallowed it before you will feel an electric current of extraordinary vitality shooting through your veins, and banishing all lassitude and exhaustion. Don't you begin to feel the effects already?

Mr. S. (*rubbing his lips with a red silk handkerchief*). Ugh!—ugh!—ugh!

Miss P. F. (*scornfully*). What is the matter, you idiot?



THE PRODUCTION OF THE MAGIC ELIXIR.

Mr. S. (*still putting his handkerchief to his mouth*). Ugh! It has nearly taken my breath away. It is

assafœtida, isn't it? or gentian, or something fearfully bitter and nauseous.

Miss P. F. (*severely*). Don't presume to pry into the mysteries of medicine, sir. That is a thing which only doctors, those who have taken their M.D. degree, as I have, should attempt to do.

Mr. S. (*in a more subdued tone*). I—I daresay, I shall be better presently.

Miss P. F. I can tell you that you never knew what health was before you took that elixir. You have been suffering from undeveloped gout, which might have broken out at any moment. You were extremely ill without knowing it.

Mr. S. Was I? (*aside*). I certainly never knew how abominable medicine could be before.

Miss P. F. You will bless the day that you took that elixir.

Mr. S. (*aside*). I am certainly not blessing it now.

G. V. Come, Aunt Penelope, now that you have administered your elixir, don't you think we ought to go and see this house that Mr. Skipper has been telling us of?

Mr. S. (*with alacrity*). You ought not to lose a moment, ladies. Joseph, write out a card to view Water side, Mr. Moneypenny's little place.

G. V. (*starting back*). *Moneypenny!*—did you say?

Miss P. F. Moneypenny!—How extraordinary!

Mr. S. (*with composure*). Yes, Mr. Maurice Moneypenny, artist, he is the owner of the house I spoke to you about just now.

Miss P. F. Well! of all the curious things in the world, this is the curiousest. It's perfectly stunning.

Mr. S. (*confidentially*). May I ask, ladies, the cause of your astonishment? As a professional man, I should be glad to know.

Miss P. F. Shall we tell him, Gladys? Shall we tell him?

G. V. I suppose you may.

Miss P. F. Well then, Mr. Skipper, some years ago an eccentric relative of ours died in the States. He had piled up the dollars, and had bought a silver mine at Denver with his savings. He left his property between my niece, Gladys Vansittart, and an English gentleman of the name of Moneypenny who had befriended him in his early days.

Mr. S. Well, madam?

Miss P. F. For many years we have been searching for people of the name of Moneypenny without success. No genuine descendants of the right Moneypenny—Maurice Moneypenny of Bradford, in Yorkshire, could be found, till you accidentally mentioned this Mr. Moneypenny. Both his christian and surname correspond with that of the person we are looking for. Say nothing about it, but let us go to look at his house. We may then discover who he really is.

Mr. S. Well, you couldn't find any one in a worse way—he is over head and ears in debt, and will be sold up in a few days, unless some windfall comes to him. Allow me to accompany you to Waterside, myself, ladies.

(*Takes down his hat.*)

Miss P. F. (*waving her hand*). No, thank you, we like to transact our own business. We are not helpless females. You forget that we are Americans, able to look after ourselves, and that *I* am a doctor of medicine. Be sure to spread the virtues of the elixir, Mr. Skipper. Whatever you do, keep that in mind.

Mr. S. (*making a wry face*). I am not likely to forget it.

Miss P. F. And if you should want another dose——

Mr. S. (*putting his handkerchief to his mouth*). Don't speak of it.

Miss P. F. You can always come to me. When once you feel the benefit of it, you will never wish to be without it.

Mr. S. (*aside*). Not if I know it—(*following them to the door*). Well, ladies, if you want your furniture removed, your brass plate put up, your blinds fixed, your patent taken out, or your marriage settlements drawn up, I am at your service. When in doubt, go to SKIPPER!

Miss P. F. (*loftily waving her hand*). We are obliged to you, sir.

G. V. (*aside*). Oh! if Lord Monkhaven would only turn up, then, indeed, our journey to Europe would be a success. As it is, I can think of nothing, hope for nothing, except for him.

Mr. S (*making a low bow*). Good afternoon, ladies, and if this house of Mr. Moneypenny's is likely to suit——

Miss P. F. We will drop you a line without fail.

Mr. S. And if he gets the silver mine.

Miss P. F. You shall hear right away. Good-day, Mr. Skipper, and don't forget the elixir.

Mr. S. (*looking after them*). Well! this has not been a lost afternoon, at all events. I'll make those American ladies pay through the nose for this, and Mr. Moneypenny too. Draw out a rough copy of two bills, Joseph, and put in Miss Freebody's:

"To experimenting on Mr. Skipper with an elixir £4 10 0

"To a testimonial as to the virtues of the same ... ... 3 10 0"

And little enough for all I have gone through! But there's no rose without a thorn, as the poet justly remarks. In Mr. Moneypenny's account I will put—

"An unlimited legacy traced, five per cent. commission charged."

If all goes well, I shall have to add to my placards and circulars, "Missing Friends Traced, Fortunes Found."

That will be sure to draw the public like needles to a

magnet (*rubbing his hands*). Upon my word, if it was not for the odious taste of that beastly elixir in my mouth, I should say this was the best day's work I ever did in my life. I think I had better now take a stroll towards Waterside, and look after my lady dóctor and her fair niece. Who knows, but they might slip through my fingers after all? [*Exit.*

ACT III.

Studio in MAURICE MONEYPENNY'S *house*—GLADYS VANSITTART *and her aunt*, MISS FREEBODY, *are seen walking about, looking at pictures, books, &c.*

G. V. Well, really, Aunt Penelope, this is a very pretty room—such an artistic dado, such cunning little brackets, and such clever little bows on them! I am downright enchanted with everything.

Miss P. F. Yes, I think it is pretty fair. We'll make up our minds to take the house right away.

G. V. But that tiresome Mr. Moneypenny won't be in for another half-hour: the servant said he wouldn't (*looking out of the window*). How I wish he would come! I do so long to get this business of taking a house settled right off. I wonder what he will be like. I suppose he will have long hair, and will smell dreadfully of smoke: all artists do (*throwing herself in a chair*). Oh, Aunt Penelope! do you think we shall ever see Lord Monkhaven again? No one could ever be half as nice as he is.

Miss P. F. Don't be so excitable, Gladys! No; I guess we'll never see Lord Monkhaven again; he's too high and lofty for us. Our folks at home used to say that these English lords were almighty humbugs. They just take a fancy and forget all about it next day.

G. V. Oh, Aunt Penelope! don't be so cruel. Lord Monkhaven isn't a bit like that: he is a regular King

Arthur, so noble, and grand, and princely. I shall never see any one like him again (*sighs*).

Miss P. F. Don't make a regular fool of yourself, Gladys. If you go on like that I shall have to give you some drops of my elixir right away; that will compose you in a minute.

G. V. No, thank you, aunt. If I can't compose myself, I don't think your elixir could compose me (*starting up*). Do you know, Aunt Penelope, that that water-colour sketch over there, that view from the Clyde, is exactly like one that I saw Lord Monkhaven taking. It is done from the very same spot. I was with him at the time.

Miss P. F. Just an accidental resemblance, I guess.

G. V. It is very strange. It is his style exactly, his colouring—everything. I could almost have sworn it was his; and there is another, taken a little higher up the river. I was with him when he selected the spot. How could it have come here?

Miss P. F. Don't be so ridiculous, Gladys.

G. V. How can I forget those days of happiness? Every incident that happened during them is stamped into my memory with letters of adamant.

Miss P. F. You ought to forget them now. Keep up your dignity. Take up with medicine as a profession, and lose yourself in the study of drugs; there's nothing like it.

G. V. What a fearful idea! *Never!* Do you know, aunt, that I have a frantic desire to lift the covering from that easel, and to see what is underneath. You can't imagine what a fit of curiosity has seized me.

Miss P. F. You should struggle against the feeling. Curiosity is unworthy of the higher development of our sex.

G. V. I can't help it. I don't care for the higher development of our sex (*standing before the easel*). An

GLADYS VANSITTART AND "DOCTOR" FREEBODY.

irresistible impulse urges me to lift this covering. Shall I, or shall I not?

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Miss P. F. Certainly *not!*

G. V. Why not?

Miss P. F. Firstly, because it would be dishonourable; and, secondly, because I reckon there is nothing worth seeing underneath.

G. V. How do you know that? Every one is allowed to look at paintings in an artist's studio; besides, I might buy something if I liked it. I think I would give the world to see what this envious covering conceals. (*Pauses, then takes a corner of the covering in her hand,*) Aunt Penelope!

Miss P. F. (*indifferently*). What do you want, you silly girl? You are disturbing me just as I was thinking of a new addition to my elixir.

G. V. (*impatiently*). I *must* unveil this picture. I couldn't sleep to-night if I didn't (*slowly lifts the covering, then utters a scream, and covers her face with her hands*). Good heavens! Oh, Aunt Penelope! Do you see what is here?

Miss P. F. (*half turning round*). No. What is it, you silly, foolish, infatuated creature?

G. V. Don't you see that it is my own portrait, a portrait of myself? though how it came to be here I cannot imagine.

Miss P. F. (*standing over her*). Yes, it certainly is like you.

G. V. Like! it is exactly like, a little flattered, but very, very like. Do you know, Aunt Penelope, I think it must have been done by Lord Monkhaven, and by no one else.

Miss P. F. Nonsense! you silly child. Don't you know that this is Mr. Moneypenny's house?

G. V. Yes; but this portrait is done just in the attitude that I sat to Lord Monkhaven one day. There are the poppies in my hair, and the cornflowers in my hands exactly as he fixed them. So many things in this

room remind me of him that I am quite bewildered. (*Looks round.*) There are Browning's Poems that he read to me at Rothesay Castle; there are those views of the Clyde; and, more than all, there is this portrait of myself which seems to tell me how he thought of me. (*Bursts into tears.*)

Miss P. F. (*fumbling in her reticule*). If you would only take a few drops of my elixir all this excitement would calm down right away.

G. V. (*putting up her hands and flinging herself back in a sofa*). Oh! Aunt Penelope, don't speak to me about that dreadful elixir. I really cannot bear it.

Miss P. F. Because you never know what is good for you (*picking up something from the floor*). What on earth is this? It looks like a billet-doux.

G. V. (*lifting her head*). Let me see it.

Miss P. F. There's something written on it, "To—to Gladys!" Well, I declare!

G. V. (*tearing it out of her hand*). I *will* see it; it must be to me. Exactly like Lord Monkhaven's writing! How strange! One would think the place must be enchanted. (*Reads*)—

"Gladys! six dreary weeks have passed
Since last I saw your face,
And yet my eyes seem following still
Your beauty and your grace.
I seem to see you standing by,
I watch your smiles and sighs,
I watch your fleeting blushes start,
And the love-light in your eyes.

Miss P. F. (*interrupting*). My gracious! what does the man mean? How would he define "love-light?" What are its component parts? Into what elements can it be dissolved?

G. V. Hush! listen to what comes next—

"An envious fate has parted us,
I struggle forth alone,
I am too poor to love—too proud
My poverty to own.
Gladys, farewell! your winsome face
No more will bless my sight,
And yet for ever you'll remain
A vision of delight. "M. M."

G. V. Signed with his initials, too! M. M.—Maurice Monkhaven. I am completely baffled (*wringing her hands*). Oh! Aunt Penelope, what *does* it all mean? "Too poor to love, too proud his poverty to own." How *can* that apply to Lord Monkhaven? How *can* this mystery ever be solved?

(*Enter* MAURICE MONEYPENNY *by a side door. He does not perceive* GLADYS VANSITTART *or* MISS FREEBODY. *Seats himself by the table, and buries his face in his folded arms.*)

M. M. Yes, the crash has come; in a few days I shall be proclaimed a bankrupt. A bankrupt! did I ever imagine that this stigma would be attached to my father's honest name?

Miss P. F. (*standing over him*). Lord Monkhaven?

M. M. (*starting up*). Miss Freebody, *you* here! and *you*, Gladys! How did you come?

Miss P. F. (*composedly*). We were looking for a furnished house, and the agent sent us here. We like it very well, and we agree to take it right away; but we want to see Mr. Moneypenny; the house belongs to him, and we have to settle about terms.

G. V. Are you a friend of Mr. Moneypenny's, Lord Monkhaven?

M. M. (*in a low, hesitating voice*). N—no—yes! What would you say, Miss Vansittart, if I told you that I was Mr. Moneypenny himself?

G. V. What, *you?* Lord Monkhaven! impossible!

M. M. Listen to me, Gladys. When you first mistook me for Lord Monkhaven, I fully intended undeceiving you, but as time went on, my courage failed, and I found it impossible to do so. I was afraid of losing your love, and I allowed you to remain under the false impression. I own that I was foolish, weak, contemptible; blame me as you like, reproach me as you choose; I deserve everything from you that you can possibly heap on me.

G. V. Then you are not Lord Monkhaven at all?

M. M. No, alas, no! Lord Monkhaven is a rich, gouty, old man, while I am Maurice Moneypenny, a penniless artist, at the mercy of creditors, without hope for the present or expectation for the future.

G. V. And this house is yours?

M. M. Yes!

G. V. And these paintings are yours?

M. M. Yes!

G. V. And these verses are yours?

M. M. Yes!

G. V. And this portrait (*going to the easel*) is done by you?

M. M. Yes, it is, indeed (*in a low voice*); painted by the hand of love, but far inferior to the original. And now, Gladys, that I have confessed the truth, I have no more to say. I leave you and your aunt in possession of my house. Make what arrangements you like with the agent, I will relieve you from my presence, and bid you an everlasting adieu (*takes her hand*). Farewell, Gladys, forget me, and may you be as happy as I would wish you to be! (*Goes to the door.*)

Miss P. F. Stop, Mr. Moneypenny, don't go yet!

M. M. (*turning round impatiently*). What do you want, Miss Freebody? Do you want to reproach me?—to tell me that I have been a base deceiver?—that I have made your niece's acquaintance under false pretences?

Miss P. F. No. I want to tell you that I guess you are mistaken in thinking you are a penniless artist.

M. M. (*stopping short*). How so?

Miss P. F. Because I reckon you've got half a silver mine.

M. M. Nonsense! you are ridiculing me. There is a time for all things, and ridicule just now is positively offensive.

Miss P. F. I'm not ridiculing you. It is a fact that our cousin Sam B. Freebody, left half a silver mine to any one of the name of Moneypenny—that is, any one who could prove he was descended from Maurice Moneypenny, of Bradford, in Yorkshire.

M. M. My father was Maurice Moneypenny, of Bradford, in Yorkshire.

Miss P. F. (*triumphantly*). I guessed he was. Then you're the right man, and no mistake. Half the silver mine is yours! I can prove it right away. Send for Mr. Skipper.

M. M. Is this true, Gladys? I can hardly believe such good fortune can be mine.

G. V. Yes, you may believe it. It is really true; the darkness has passed away and the dawn has come.

M. M. And you, Gladys, you yourself. Now that I have something to offer you, can it be that you will forgive my wilful—my cruel deception? Can it be that you will love me still?

G. V. (*giving him her hand*). I should just think I would. Oh! you silly, wouldn't I as soon have you a Moneypenny as a Monkhaven? It's yourself I like, not anything you've got. You loved me without knowing I was an heiress, and I loved you—because—because I couldn't help it! (*hiding her face in his shoulder*).

M. M. This is indeed music in my ears.

Miss P. F. As Gladys has the other half of the silver mine, we may as well join the two halves together,

and make a whole, right away. What do you say, Gladys?

G. V. (*looking up*). I am quite willing, Aunt Penelope, if Mr. Moneypenny is.

M. M. (*clasping her in his arms*). Oh! Gladys, this is too much, I am too happy.

Miss P. F. To counteract the effects of all this excitement, I would strongly advise a dose of my magic elixir—a small teaspoonful in a little water—to be taken every two hours till the excitement subsides. The effect will be miraculous.

G. V. Never mind about your elixir now, Aunt Penelope; we have an elixir of our own—the elixir of love!

M. M. We have, indeed, and it beats out all the elixirs in the world.

Miss P. F. (*sharply*). No, sir, it does *not*. Wait till I take out my patent and put up my brass plate. Why, I expect I shall have to hire a horse and buggy to drive round and visit my patients.

(*Enter* HAROLD DUTTON *and* MR. SKIPPER. ELIZA *and* JOSEPH *in the background.*)

Mr. S. (*rubbing his hands*). Well, ladies and gentlemen, everything seems nicely arranged. The house is taken furnished, by Miss Freebody and her niece, at a yearly rental of £180; and Mr. Moneypenny, on his part, agrees to give me a commission of five per cent. on his Denver silver mine. All this business has been transacted through the medium of my office. Was I not perfectly right in saying, "When in doubt, go to SKIPPER?"

H. D. (*slily*). I think your next stroke of business, Mr. Skipper, will be to make arrangements for a wedding.

Mr. S. A wedding! That's quite in my line. I can

get the settlements drawn up, insure the lives, and hire out the carriages. May I ask if Miss Freebody is going to carry on the medical profession with a partner?

Miss P. F. (*severely*). No, sir, certainly not.

H. D. But Mr. Moneypenny is going to carry on the artistic profession with a partner, and a charming one he has chosen—Miss Gladys Vansittart (*taking her by the hand and joining it to that of* MAURICE MONEYPENNY.) Allow me to introduce you to the future bride.

Mr. S. (*rubbing his hands*). Delighted, I'm sure. Another startling proof of how excellently things are arranged by the medium of my office. Husbands obtain wives, bankrupts obtain fortunes, medical women obtain practices, and all through Skipper! Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, make it a point always to go to SKIPPER!!!

RIGHT HAND.	CENTRE.		LEFT HAND.
Miss. P. F.			*H. D.*
Mr. S. S.	*G. V.*	*M. M.*	*Eliza.*
			Joseph.

(*Curtain.*)

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